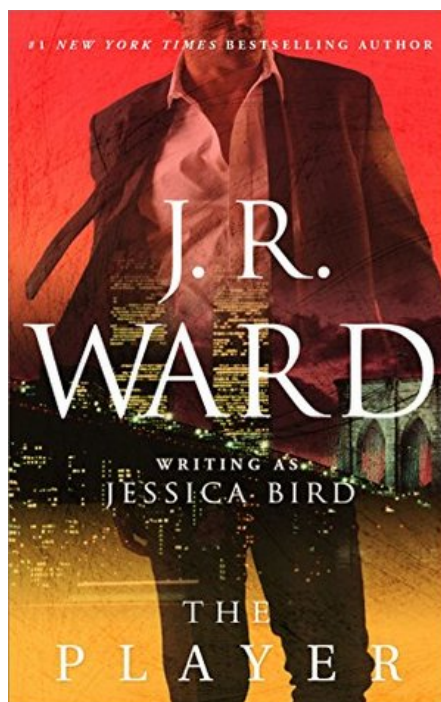




The Player

Jessica Bird , J.R. Ward

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The Player

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A powerful man finds the one woman who completes him. The second *Moorehouse Legacy* novel from *New York Times* bestselling author J.R. Ward writing as Jessica Bird. *Ruthless* might as well be Gray Bennett's middle name. When the renowned Washington, D.C., insider talks, powerful people listen. But Gray hasn't come home to Saranac Lake to play politics. Or play at all. A tragedy has brought Gray Bennett back to face everything he thought he'd left behind. Including the most unlikely of women. The mousy redhead who used to run around the Moorehouse B and B—the one he never noticed—is now all fiery hair and lush curves. But sweet Joy Moorehouse is too innocent for a cynic like him. So Gray won't let himself lay a hand on her...until the night he can no longer resist the woman she has become. That's when he discovers a secret that leaves him gasping for breath—and wanting more. A reader-favorite story originally published as *His Comfort and Joy*.

The Player Details

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From Reader Review The Player for online ebook

Esther David says

All right the review.. Hmm..where do I start? Okay let's start at the start. Jessica Bird tells us about her idea of the kind of men that roam around us. And I agree with her. This one is about the Player, someone who steamrolls over you and you are so madly in love that you don't care. Well you keep going after him and again till you give up and then he comes back to you. Well, I must tell that happens in a Harlequin book. Real life will bite you in a place of your body that will hurt you the most. Been there, done that. Anyway, I'm deviating. The plot was good and made me read it till the finish. Although I must admit of having hoped to see a sad heart wrenching end to the story (hopelessly), I'm glad it ended the way it ended. The best part was the way Gray our hero keeps having thoughts and conversations with himself. That in fact will make any reader go back and read it again. At least I did. Here's the piece

Before he could say anything, a tuxedoed waiter appeared at their table. "Have you made your selections?"

Um, yeah, Gray thought. I'll have the total body meltdown with a side of what-the-hell-was-I-thinking. She, evidently, will be having the sex-goddess pot pie.

:-D

Jae says

Gray was too cold and in control for my taste. Thank goodness for the smart and likable Joy. And even after their HEA, I am not holding my breath for a lasting one. That man has too many issues with trust and the way he behaved with Joy just about sum his immaturity. And don't get me started on his hang up with his mother.

Still, I liked the story if not the hero.

CrazyForRomance says

Due stelle e mezzo.

C'era una volta una ragazza dolce e carina, la quale nutriva una cotta per un ragazzo più grande di lei. Lui si chiamava Gray, un ragazzo forte e con dei segreti, che con il tempo diventò un uomo rispettato, ma anche molto temuto. Nel frattempo, la piccola Joy cresceva, e con sé cresceva anche l'interesse e il debole che provava per Gray. Nonostante i loro mondi estremamente diversi, un legame invisibile sembrava legarli.. Gray conosce da sempre la piccola rossa, ed è solo da qualche tempo che si è accorto di lei, ma sa anche che le tipe come Joy non devono nemmeno avvicinarsi ai tipi come lui. E Joy non ha mai creduto di avere una reale possibilità fino a quando non le è venuta incontro la cucina del B&b della sua famiglia.

Si prospetta una bella storia.

Joy è una ragazza che si è sempre accontentata di ciò che l'ha sempre circondata, e l'ha sempre fatto senza alcun peso, fino a quando.. non si accorge che oltre quel lago, quella natura, quel b&b e oltre la sua famiglia, c'è l'occasione per essere se stessa: ci sono i suoi sogni, che ha sempre tenuto perfettamente piegati nel proprio cassetto; c'è una vita che non ha mai pensato di poter vivere, e cose che non credeva di poter fare. Un conto è conoscere una sola strada e percorrerla nel miglior modo possibile; un altro è conoscerne due, testarle, e scegliere quella che più piace: la più breve? La panoramica? Quella in salita? Ciò che Joy non ha mai conosciuto, prima che nella sua vita entrasse Gray (e non dimentichiamo Cassandra), è proprio questo, l'emozione di avere una possibilità, e soprattutto di poterla scegliere.

Gray è un uomo che ha costruito delle alte mura attorno a se. Un'adolescenza con dei segreti che tuttora lo divorano nel profondo; un padre che ama, amici che stima, un lavoro diventato così semplice ma sempre più riprovevole. Il suo passato, il suo lavoro e il suo rapporto con le donne, gli ricordano ogni giorno che uomo sia, e di certo non è l'uomo per Joy. Ma combattere fino allo stremo le proprie emozioni credete possa funzionare? Se sappiamo qualcosa sull'amore, è che questo non ha regole.. gioca sporco e soprattutto la sua posta è sempre alta: gioia immensa o immenso dolore. Quindi come potrà mai procedere tra Gray e Joy, sapendo che, per quanto la testa combatta, il cuore la spunta sempre?

Continua su Crazy For Romance

Miraphora says

Non c'è niente che possa vincere il paragone con una lettura Linus. Una copertina di Linus in versione cartacea è quello che serve quando arrivi al limite della sopportazione: romanzi noiosi, pessime traduzioni, ripetitività di un genere, insomma...quando hai bisogno di qualcosa di sicuro, al 100% fidato allora devi scegliere tra le letture Linus. Per me sono poche le autrici che mi assicurano una soddisfazione alta - molto alta, in alcuni casi - e per questo me le tengo da parte, come scorta nei momenti bui di crisi nera.

Pochi giorni fa ho dovuto tirare fuori la mia arma super pesante: la Ward. La mia scelta è ricaduta su una ristampa dei suoi contemporanei e secondo di una serie che avevo già iniziato. La trama del primo romanzo era ben viva nella mia memoria e soprattutto i personaggi principali del secondo romanzo mi erano rimasti impressi per cui pronti partenza via!

In 2 giorni l'ho finito. Certo è corto, 384 pagine in formato tascabile, ma la resa è tantissima.

Nella puntata precedente...Frankie, la sorella maggiore, riesce a salvare il B&B di famiglia grazie all'intervento di Nate, cuoco provetto e super bad boy, che le ruba anche il cuore. Nel frattempo...la sorella minore Joy si strugge d'amore per Gray, il bad boy che ha fatto carriera, il donnaiolo che compare una volta all'anno e che è sempre gentile con lei.

In questo episodio...Joy è stufa marcia di essere considerata la mascotte della casa. Frankie e Nate la trattano più come una sorellina minore che come una donna e l'obbligo di curare la nonna comincia a pesarle. Joy non ha mai avuto la possibilità di vivere la sua vita, al contrario di Frankie che ha preso in gestione il B&B con passione, lei vuole volare via e imparare a conoscersi. Joy si rende perfettamente conto che i suoi desideri devono passare brutalmente in secondo piano rispetto alla famiglia, così si è abituata al suo ruolo di sorellina e di badante. C'è una sola cosa di cui non può proprio fare a meno, una cosa di cui non si vuole privare perché è sua, solo sua e nessuno ne è a conoscenza: Gray. Joy è perdutamente innamorata di lui fin da quando la sua cotta adolescenziale si è trasformata in passione adulta. Lo vede solo per pochi giorni all'anno, ogni anno, e ogni santa volta cerca di stare in zona, di vederlo e magari di scambiare un saluto perché poi lui sparirà. Joy non ha mai, nemmeno una volta, pensato di poter essere interessante agli occhi del sofisticato politico, dell'uomo d'affari fatto e finito. Gray è l'opposto di quello che Joy dovrebbe trovare interessante: è pericoloso, ha avuto tantissime donne e nessuna lo ha legato a sé e non ha nessuna tendenza all'amore romantico. Gray è l'uomo sbagliato e tutti lo sanno. Proprio per questo l'attrazione di Joy è un segreto segretissimo. Eppure Gray, per quanto sia il suo opposto, la vede e ne rimane colpito: lei è diversa da

- Overall: I really enjoyed this read, despite the minor "complaints" mentioned above. Ms. Bird made me care for Gray and Joy, and her writing kept the story flowing effortlessly. As I've grown to expect since I read my 1st book by Ms. Bird, there were echoes of J.R. Ward's very characteristic writing style in this book too and I'm not sure how I feel about it because it's kind of distracting. Not enough to ruin the read, though.

Ermione says

Premetto che questo commento sarà pieno di SPOILER (anche se, in realtà, la storia è così semplice e prevedibile che c'è ben poco da spoilerare...) e, probabilmente, pieno di parolacce, perché a me certe cose scatenano "il piccolo camionista" interiore, non posso farci nulla. Perché, ok che un romance generalmente ha la struttura semplice di una fiaba, ma quando la semplicità sconfina troppo nel nulla condito da idiozia cominciano a girarmi gli zebedei.

Dunque, se siete allergiche agli spoiler di ogni tipo e siete donnine a modo e il turpiloquio vi infastidisce, fermatevi pure.

Allora, credo che l'intreccio si possa riassumere in poche righe: lei (giovane donna appartenente ad una famiglia dell'aristocrazia decaduta: per intenderci, il villone di famiglia è stato trasformato in un B&B) è da sempre infatuata di lui (ricchissimo, rampante e spregiudicato consulente di noti personaggi politici), che la conosce da sempre e da sempre la tratta con indifferenza, ma che dopo averla vista tuffarsi nel lago in bikini è praticamente rimasto folgorato. I due si incontrano in diverse situazioni e sono perennemente infoiati. Lei, che si diletta con taglio e cucito, viene invitata a NY da un'amica di lui, che si propone di lanciarla nel mondo della moda. Lui lavora tra NY e Washington e, come è facile intuire, visto l'infoiamento di cui sopra, ad un certo punto ci scappa la frittata. Ma, dal momento che lui si sente in colpa per averla deflorata (!!!), il brodino si allunga grazie ad una serie di assurdi tira e molla fino al vomitevole happy ending finale, con tanto di pubblica proposta di matrimonio in ginocchio. Scusate, sto cercando di controllare un conato.

Ora, sono convinta che, di per sé, una trama semplice non sempre e non necessariamente costituisca il fattore predittivo di una ca*ata. Ci vuole altro e qui la Bird/Ward ci offre un ingrediente fondamentale: un protagonista che per come si comporta e come parla ti fa rimpiangere gli uomini della vita reale. Ma tanto. Un evento quasi eccezionale per una lettrice di romance.

L'autrice ce lo presenta come uno spregiudicato, uno sciupafemmine, freddo, cinico e calcolatore, indurito dalle traumatiche esperienze del suo passato. Ma lo volete sapere in che cosa consistono queste esperienze che lo hanno reso così gelido e incapace di amare? Da bambino ha beccato più volte la mamma a zozzoleggiare con vari uomini e ha imparato a "coprirla" in modo che il paparino non la lasciasse e, quindi, si è convinto che tutte le donne sono zoccole come mamma. Tutto qui. Sul serio. Tutto qui.

Ma quello che mi ha scatenato la bestia è stato il suo atteggiamento nel momento in cui scopre che lei, alla veneranda età di 26 anni, è ancora illibata.

Ora, noi lettrici di romance sappiamo che questo della "inaspettata deflorazione" è un topic abbastanza classico nel genere. Ma, francamente, non mi era mai capitato di vederlo reso in questo modo.

Lui la porta a letto, va sparato come treno ad alta velocità...per poi ritirarsi di scatto – che neanche glielo avesse morso un gatto – schizzare via e giacere tutta la notte vicino a lei, senza toccarla, tremante e sotto shock. Lui. Non lei. Lui. Non so, forse il problema è che io sono una di quelle lettrici che tendono ad immedesimarsi nella protagonista, quindi, è facile indovinare quali istinti violenti mi si siano scatenati. A parte il fatto che se una donna di 26 anni decide consapevolmente di dartela, per favore, evita di trattarla come una ragazzina di 15 anni, incapace di intendere e di volere...ma, soprattutto, almeno impegnati per soddisfarla, larva umana, brutto idiota parassita che non sei altro! E invece no, lui se ne sta lì a cospargersi il capo di cenere e a piangersi addosso. E qui la povera lettrice si ritrova a pensare: adesso gli passa e inizia a comportarsi da uomo. Noooooo!!! Si attacca a lei come una cozza (appuntamenti, cene, telefonate etc.), MA

SEMPRE SENZA SFIORARLA, perché si sente in colpa. Addirittura la porta da Tiffany (mica nella bottega di Gigetto!) per farle scegliere un anello, chiedendole di sposarlo per “riparare”. Stiamo parlando di un romanzo contemporaneo pubblicato nel 2006. Dico, 2006! E queste sceneggiate continuano fino alla fine, anche dopo che quella povera disgraziata di Joy, la protagonista, riesce a portarlo a letto...e a farcelo restare, perdinci!

E poi, non so voi, ma io un uomo che se ne esce con frasi come “Non meritavo il dono della tua innocenza” o “Creatura dolcissima, sarai la mia rovina” mi verrebbe solo di riempirlo di sberle. Arghhhhh!!! Datemi subito un romanzo della Stuart o, ancora meglio, di Anna Chillon!!! Quelli sì che sono uomini “come si deve”, eccheccacchio!

Tre stelline scarse, ma giusto perché non è scritto male e sono riuscita ad arrivare alla fine.

Jacqueline says

This one was much better than the first one. The characters were more interesting and more fully developed. Gray especially had a lot of bad stuff running around in his head that he had to overcome. Also the premise was more interesting. Naive young woman and a jaded cynical man who thinks he's too old for her but just can't stay away. The angst level was higher here and it looks like the next one is going to be even more angsty.

AlenGarou says

Ok, fermi un momento.

Prima d’iniziare ho una domanda!

Chi minkia ha deciso il titolo?

Voglio dire, non avrei avuto nulla da ridire se il protagonista in questione fosse stato uno sportivo, un broker o comunque qualcuno che si giocava la reputazione. Perché in questo contesto non ha alcun senso e non è nemmeno la cosa peggiore. Qui si giocano i neuroni.

Ma è anche vero che noi Italiani in fatto di tradurre titoli o modificare copertine faccio davvero pena...

Veniamo a noi!

Benvenuti a una nuova recensione!

Come sapete sono una brutta persona e non sono in grado di svolgere una storia d’amore classica (classica nel senso: senza morti, con troppi drammi inutili e zero immaginazione), quindi ho pensato di dedicarmi alla lettura di un romanzo del genere per farmi venire la voglia di scrivere. E chi potevo scegliere se non la Zia Ward?

Ma le mie aspettative sono crollate come un castello di carte man mano che procedevo con la lettura. E dire che il precedente volume mi era piaciuto molto, tant’è che, dopo eoni e molta acqua sotto i ponti, me lo ricordo ancora.

Comunque l’inizio parte bene e, complice lo stile fantastico della Ward, risulta entusiasmante.

I due protagonisti questa volta sono Joy, la sorellina di Frankie protagonista del primo romanzo, e Gray, scapolo d’oro e benestante oltre che consulente politico.

Inutile dire che sembrava quasi di rileggere Orgoglio e Pregiudizio. Oltretutto lui di cognome fa Bennett. Coincidenze? Io non credo.

Anche perché la sua mentalità all’antica è di quelle parti. E vi risparmio la scena perché mi ha slogato la mandibola.

Tuttavia, devo ammettere che inizialmente ero molto colpita da Gray per il suo carisma e le sue paturnie (che trovo sempre adorabili nei pirla). Anche Joy non si è dimostrata da meno, però...

Se Gray mi stava simpatico, alla fine volevo gettarlo sotto a quel benedetto treno.
Ora, capisco i drammi. Capisco anche le delusioni. A quanto pare una storia d'amore DEVE AVERLI SEMPRE! Perché a quanto pare il pubblico li vuole, ma a me fanno solo girare le ovaie. In dose moderate posso anche capirli, ma qui si concentra tutto su cose campate in aria.
No, davvero.
Gray poi è un grandissimo bipolare.
La vuole, non la vuole, la rivuole, non la vuole, la pensa innocente, la considera una manipolatrice, poi si pente, poi s'incazza, poi si ripente, l'allontana, la segue.
E che cazzo Gray deciditi!
Joy poi è talmente confusa da lui per poco non si colpisce da sola. Se non fosse che lo ama da anni l'avrebbe mandato a cagare dopo pochi giorni. Con le giuste ragioni.
Per carità, quando sono a Saranac Lake è un piacere leggerli, ma dopo New York... stendiamo un velo pietoso.
Senza poi contare come si conclude la loro prima volta.
Ma il peggio è stato il finale.
Sfuriata degna di una lotta titanica, lei che se ne va perché, ovviamente, ne ha le palle piene, lui che mosso dal suo amore salta sul treno in corsa e proposta di matrimonio contornata da gente random che piange. Fine.
Waaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaard...
Cosa minkia ti è successo?
Dimmi che hai sbattuto la testa.
Dimmi che ti si è rotto il computer e hai dovuto riscrivere in fretta e furia metà romanzo.
Dimmi che ti sei ubriacata con il tuo agente e hai scritto tutto di getto.
No, perché rispetto a tutti gli altri sui libri questo è senza dubbio il più svarionato.
Ad ogni modo ha i suoi lati positivi (tipo che in un paio di ore lo finisci).
Come detto, la prima parte a Saranac Lake mi è piaciuta, anche perché Gray era ancora sopportabile. Senza contare la faccenda tra Alex, il fratello di Joy e Frankie che nel precedente volume ha avuto un incidente dove è morto il suo migliore amico, e Cass, moglie del suo migliore amico. Indovinate un po'? eh eh.
Per non parlare di tutte le scene del B&B. Ma sì, avrei preferito una maggiore partecipazione da parte di Frankie e Nate e magari qual cosina di più sul loro matrimonio.
In sostanza non posso dire che non mi sia piaciuto perché sarebbe una bugia, ma cristo santo... ora devo farmi controllare la glicemia.
Spero che il prossimo non sia così "deludente". O, almeno, che sia realistico.
Sì, mi accontento del realismo...
Pleaseeeee

Julianna says

Reviewed for THC Reviews

"4.5 stars" Long, short, or somewhere in between, I don't think J. R. Ward (in this case writing as Jessica Bird) is capable of writing a bad book. I've very much enjoyed everything I've read by her so far, and *His Comfort and Joy* was no exception. Even though it's one of her earlier works, written in a short novel format, the plot and character development was stellar. I loved both Gray and Joy, as well as the way in which their romance builds. It's both sweet and angsty, just the way I like it. The love scenes are a little steamier than most Silhouette books I've read and more closely reflect Ms. Bird style that's seen in her *BDB* books than some of her earlier contemporaries, which was a plus. I also liked the juxtaposition between the rural upstate New York setting and New York City. It brought an interesting flavor to the story. The supporting cast was superb too, and I found it especially impressive that the author was able to build their characters so well in this shorter format. Everything combined made this book a near-perfect read for me.

Gray turned out to be a complex hero. He has a reputation as a player both in business and his personal life. He works as a political consultant, and is basically a game-maker. If a politician wants to get elected to office, Gray is the man to make it happen, and as such, he sometimes treads into the gray zone to get the job done. In his personal life, he's known as a ladies' man who freely admits that it's not unusual for him to spend the night with a woman and then leave her in the morning, never looking back. Gray's family owns a house on the same lake near Joy's family home, so he's known her for years, but it hasn't been until recently that he's started to notice that somewhere along the line she turned into a beautiful and desirable woman. He begins to feel unfamiliar pangs of jealousy when she's around other men, but he's vowed never to marry and knows that Joy is not the type of girl who deserves a one-night stand. Gray carried around a lot of pain over his parent's broken marriage. He spent a large part his childhood and teen years, helping his mother cover up her numerous infidelities that broke his father's heart, so he has trouble trusting women to be truthful and faithful. Gray's views on women slowly begin to change when he gets involved with Joy and especially after he discovers her virginity in a moment of passion. IMHO, what he did after that was sweet if a little misguided. But despite that he still has trouble fully opening his heart up to her. His past has left him cynical and jaded, while his work in politics has left him feeling dirty and tainted, and he doesn't want to sully something as perfect as Joy by sharing that part of his life with her. Not to mention, he's just downright afraid that she's going to end up breaking his heart if he allows himself to love her. I loved Gray's character and how he has to go through this transformative process to get to a place where he can open his heart to Joy's love, but at the same time he takes so long to get there, it can be a tad frustrating. This is the one and only reason I ended up dropping one-half star from the rating, but I'll also admit that Gray's final gesture was so grand, he almost made up for it so that I waffled on whether to give it the full five.

Joy is a wonderful heroine, who is sweetness personified, and everything Gray needed to help him understand that all women aren't like his mother. Joy is deeply committed to her family. She and her siblings lost their parents in an accident when Joy was just a teenager, so her older sister, Frankie (*Beauty and the Black Sheep*) finished raising her. Together, they run a bed and breakfast in their family's old Victorian mansion. Joy went off to college and got a practical degree that she hoped would help her family and worked through college to foot the bill. Then she came back home to help Frankie with the family business and to take care of her grandmother who has Alzheimer's, so she hasn't had time to pursue her real dream of becoming a fashion designer or for any relationships. Even though she only sees him a few times a year when he's at his family's home on the lake, Joy has been in love with Gray from afar for years. She's just about to give up on her childish fairy tale notion of a romance with him when he finally starts to take notice of her. She knows he's not really the type to settle down, but she's willing to give him whatever he'll accept, until an aborted love-making session changes everything. Gray goes from a passionate alpha male to an almost coldly formal gentleman in a heartbeat. In some ways, he's now the perfect boyfriend always calling and taking her out, but never touching her passionately like before and unwilling or unable to open up and share his life with her, leaving Joy wondering what exactly they have between them. During this time, I had to admire Joy for her patience in dealing with Gray and for keeping hope alive that they could eventually turn things around and become the romantic couple she wants them to be.

As I mentioned before, the author fits in quite a number of supporting characters who are seen in other related books. Gray was previously seen as a secondary character in some of the previous books. Nate and Frankie, the hero and heroine of *Beauty and the Black Sheep* aka *The Rebel*, are still running the White Caps B & B and are planning a wedding in this book. Nate's best friend and chef, Spike, has joined them in the kitchen and as a business partner. He has an unusual physical feature that makes me wonder if he's somehow related to a couple of the brothers from the BDB. He'll become the hero of book #4, *A Man in a Million* aka *The Rogue*. I enjoyed the close relationship Joy has with her brother, Alex, who is still recuperating from severe injuries sustained in a sailing accident that killed his best friend. We discover that he's loved his friend's widow, Cassandra, for a long time, and she helps launch Joy's fashion designing career. These two become the hero and heroine of the next book in the *Moorehouse Legacy*, *From the First* aka *The Renegade*. We're also introduced to Gray's best friend, Sean O'Banyon who becomes the hero of *The Billionaire Next Door* aka *The Billionaire*. In addition, there's a brief mention of Cassandra attending a Hall Foundation

fund-raiser, which of course, is the charitable organization run by Grace Hall of *An Unforgettable Lady*.

Overall, I had a really great time reading *His Comfort and Joy*. There's a certain sweetness in Gray and Joy's relationship that I truly loved, and if not for Gray's stubborn resistance to admitting that he was falling in love with Joy, it would have been an absolutely perfect read for me. In spite of that, it was still pretty awesome. I very much enjoyed all the character connections too. I'm already half in love with Alex, so I can't wait to read his book to find out more about him, as well as to see him and Cassandra get their HEA.

Rhapsody says

Joy lives in her family's B&B and looks after her demented grandmother. She's been in love with the wealthy Gray for years but has never done anything about it. When finally does notice her, he refuses to act on his impulse because she seems too young and innocent. Then he starts distrusting her. They get to know one another better when she travels to New York after being commissioned to design an evening gown for one of his friends, but there are a lot of misunderstandings along the way because Gray has so many issues with women and relationships.

I liked it better than the first Moorehouse book involving her older sister. Gray was a pretty imposing alpha male, but he was a bit special in that he really made himself vulnerable a few times. I liked Joy, and I enjoyed how while she was so innocently in love with Gray she was also willing to stand up for herself and not tolerate his behavior. Still, it's very much an "average" read. It didn't suck me in the way the really good romance novels do.

Selly - Leggere Romanticamente says

Mi è piaciuto tanto!

Un bel romance di quelli che piacciono a me, aspetto il terzo della serie!

UniquelyMoi ~ BlithelyBookish says

My Review:

Joy Moorehouse has loved Grayson Bennett from afar for years, and while they have homes not far away from each other, they live in totally different worlds. Grayson's world is one of political maneuverings, high class parties and more one night stands than he can remember while Joy lives at the family's struggling B&B, helping out as she can and caring for her Grandmother who suffers from dementia. To say they have little or nothing in common is an understatement and if it weren't for the fact that he knew and called her by name, she'd have thought he didn't even know she existed – but she would have been wrong.

Gray has been fighting his desire for Joy for years, having been drawn to her innocence, her confidence and her beauty. But as far as he is concerned, she deserves a much better man than he could ever hope to be. Embittered by his years of political consulting and rubbing shoulders with some of the country's most powerful – and least honorable – men, he doesn't see himself as a man who could ever be worthy of someone like her. And when it becomes clear that she's as attracted to him as he is to her, he starts throwing up all kinds of obstacles to keep them apart and protect her from the man he is, the man he will always be.

I'm really enjoying this series. While the books are light, easy reads, they are by no means brainless. As she does with her Black Dagger Brotherhood series which she writes under the name J.R. Ward, Jessica Bird has given us complex characters who are often times too noble and self sacrificing for their own good.

As is always the case with all of her stories, it was a pleasure to watch the characters, Joy and Grayson, grow. I loved seeing Joy, with her inherent goodness, reach out to and try to break through the cynicism that had embedded itself into Grayson's soul and embrace him, loving the man for all he is, all he is not, and all that he might become.

And without giving too much away, I have to say, she really, *really*... REALLY, had her work cut out for her.

Next up, From The First, Alex Moorehouse's story!

Buggy says

Opening line: *"The boat's engine throbbed as Grayson Bennett kept the Hacker at a low speed and close to the lakeshore."*

HIS COMFORT AND JOY is book 2 in the Moorehouse legacy trilogy which I discovered through being a fan of JR Ward and her Black Dagger Brotherhood. I was surprised by how much I enjoyed this romance, although its within this instalment that you really begin to hear Ward's voice (and some of the Brothers too) The level of sexual tension throughout the story is such that I couldn't put it down. It's clever, interesting and Wow, can Ms Bird ever write a tortured love scene.

Joy Moorehouse has fantasized about Grayson Bennett for ages but not once during the 5 or 6 times a year that she sees him has he ever really noticed her. Truthfully, she realizes he probably doesn't even know her name. I mean she's being ridiculous right? Why would a wealthy political consultant and playboy extraordinaire notice her? She's just a small town nobody working in the family's B&B and looking after her ailing grandmother, he's a Washington big shot, several years older and experienced in the ways of the world. In fact the last couple of times Joy saw him he was just down right rude. What Joy doesn't realize of course is that Gray has to keep his distance; he simply doesn't trust himself when he's around her anymore.

Ever since he saw her in that bikini he can't seem to get her out of his head. Gray can barely breathe when she's near and is filled with raging, unexplainable jealousy (among other things.) Worst of all, nasty thoughts have been swimming around in his head, thoughts of what he'd like to do to her sweet virginal body given the chance. Yeah he'd better keep far away from Joy because the two of them together could only spell disaster he'd eventually wind up hurting her and Gray doesn't think his heart could take it.

Bird's build-up to this couple's first kiss (or in this case first dance) is well done and had me turning the pages in a fever of anticipation. When they finally touch during the slow dance it's well... amazing. As a whole this story kept me entertained and was just different enough from the normal Harlequin formula to keep me guessing. It contains a movie-worthy moment on a train and Bird's usual expertise with multiple POV's. I enjoyed the updates on our past couple as well as the continual development of future storylines. Book #3, From The First (The Moorehouse Legacy, #3) is next and I can't wait to see how Joy's wounded and grief-stricken brother Alex finally finds happiness. Yay for me, another tortured hero.

I would highly recommend that fans of JR Ward check out this series and all of Jessica Bird's earlier writings. Cheers

Here's the correct reading order
(The Moorehouse Legacy)
1-Beauty And The Black Sheep
2-His comfort and Joy
3-From The First
4-A Man In A Million

(The O'Banyon Brothers)Bird/Ward has never completed this series
1-The Billionaire Next Door

Carrie says

(Originally published in 2006 as His Comfort and Joy by Jessica Bird)

Review for Speaking of Audiobooks: <http://www.likesbooks.com/blog/?p=8418>

Narrated by Emily Beresford

Grayson is a political consultant whose job is to polish a candidate's image and make problems disappear. In the dog-eat-dog world of politics, that means less than savory tactics are sometimes necessary. While his power and good looks have gained him a reputation as a lady's man, his childhood has left him jaded on the subjects of love and marriage.

Joy is in her mid-twenties and inexperienced with love and life. She helps run her family's inn and catering business and assists in caring for her great aunt. Joy has a knack for sewing and clothing design but hasn't yet figured out what she wants in life. She's known Gray for years and has harbored a crush on him all that time.

Gray is powerfully attracted to Joy (she "made him feel male all the way to his chromosomes"), but he won't make a move. He sees her as a small town innocent and himself as the "player" who has done too many shady things. When circumstances push them together, Gray gives into his attraction and takes Joy to bed ("He'd never been so turned on."). Once he makes his move and realizes she's a virgin, he's horrified and stops immediately. Joy is disappointed but Gray is adamant that he can't continue. For much of the book Gray agonizes over what he did, as he alternately spends time with Joy and then avoids her. Joy becomes confused and finally angry over Gray's schizophrenic behavior.

The Player isn't enhanced by the narration. Emily Beresford has a nice voice and she differentiates between characters well enough but there are a couple of problems. Ms. Beresford breaks sentences into phrases, not always logically, and she pauses at the end of each phrase.

"He could have licked (pause) the sweetness (pause) from her lips."

"The pain of wanting her was sharp (pause) and shiny as a blade (pause) bearing deep into the muscles of his thighs (pause) making his back spasm."

Another problem is Ms. Beresford's character voice for Gray, specifically whenever he is feeling any strong emotion. I believe she is striving for the graveling voice of passion, but she only succeeds in achieving the wheezing sound of an asthmatic. As performed, the strangled voice makes Gray sound weak instead of

passionate.

The Player is over-written and overwrought (“...his breath punched out of his mouth.”). Gray, the savvy political consultant, is literally biting his knuckles over the fact that he took Joy’s virginity, and he’s so swamped with guilt he can’t concentrate on his work. Then there is Joy, teaching Gray that love conquers all and sex with a small town girl is the best of his life. Of course, there has to be a misunderstanding and a few other obstacles to their happiness, but the reader can take comfort knowing that these two rather pathetic people are finally off the market, so it’s safe to return to dating.

Brandi Salazar says

I don't want to rehash the plot, so I will get straight to my thoughts.

Right out of the starting gate, I liked these characters. Each one has that strong, unique voice I have come to expect in Ward's characters. Gray was powerful, fierce, and commanding, and yet he had that soft under layer that lets you know that he isn't a bad person, but maybe just following down the wrong path. Joy is the type of woman who is caring and thoughtful and gives a lot of herself, probably too much, even at the expense of her own happiness. She has been in love with Gray for years but doesn't really consider herself in his league, not to mention that everyone and their mother seems to be warning her to stay away for her own good.

The story itself was well-written. It had tragedy and sorrow and enough misunderstandings to try a saint's patience. As much as I liked the overall storyline, I was annoyed with Joy and her absolute need to respond to Gray when it seemed to me that, although he had his redeeming qualities, she didn't know that and should have dropped him on his ass, hard...several times. I think what really bothered me about the story, however, isn't all the wishy washy stuff, but the ending.

I have grown somewhat accustomed to the type of endings Ward gives in her BDB and Fallen Angels series that leave me wanting so much more and ready to throw myself over a cliff to get it, that this one left me saying "Huh? Really?" Originality clearly wasn't the name of the game here. Instead, the ending was completely cliched. I can't count how many times this scenario has played out in movies and TV shows where...

SPOILER ALERT

...the hero defies death, leaping onto the back of a fast moving train to get to his lady love and plead for her forgiveness, followed up by the spilling of his guts then the down on one knee proposal of which, if she doesn't accept, the lady behind her happily will.

Needless to say, this one fell flat for me. Instead of finishing strong, it took the easy way out. I still love Ward, but I don't know if I will venture into her traditional romance novels again.

Oh, who am I kidding, of course I will! It's J.R. Ward for crying out loud!
