



Learning from Isaac

Dev Bentham

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It's hard to break out of a rut. For years, Nathan submerged himself into his job at St. Genevieve's. He enjoys teaching, hates faculty meetings, loves his science and has committed himself to the cycle of college life. Along the way, he's become resigned to being a gay man in a straight culture, a Jew among Catholics, and single in a world of couples. Then the brilliant Isaac Wolf appears in his classroom. Isaac's a few years older than his fellow students, gorgeous, self-composed and Jewish.

Isaac has his own secrets, which Nathan finds out at the racy new club downtown where the boys who dance out front can be bought in the back room. Nathan thinks he's about to get a lap dance, but behind the beaded curtain the man on his knees turns out to be Isaac. Nathan's mind isn't the only thing Isaac blows. Afterward, Nathan can't stop thinking about that night. The question is whether Nathan can let himself fall in love with a student, much less someone with Isaac's checkered past. Is it too late for a student to teach his professor the true nature of love and respect?

This is a revised, author's edition of the first Tarnished Souls story, originally published in 2012 by Loose Id.

Publisher's Note: This book contains graphic imagery of men having sex together. And enjoying it. However, the story is primarily a romance. Don't be disappointed if you read pages and pages and pages without encountering acts, organs or orgasms.

Learning from Isaac Details

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From Reader Review Learning from Isaac for online ebook

Amy says

Well that was a pleasant surprise! This book was not even on my radar until today. I needed a book with a scientist or inventor for BINGO and couldn't find anything that interested me. I ended up picking this one because it was the shortest one on the list that still met the 100 page min requirement. Funny thing is, I really liked the book! It was very well written and hit a lot of my hot buttons: teacher-student, age difference, rent boy. There was a bit of drama, but it was resolved quickly. Overall, a very good read! I will definitely check out more from this author :)

Lelyana says

I feel a bit ambivalent about this story. While I like Isaac, and 'seeing' him as a strong person, and young. I didn't feel connection with Nathan. Me and Nathan has no chemistry :)

For a man his age (42), he acted like a teenager. Doubt everything about Isaac.

Well okay, Isaac's 'profession' aside from being a student annoyed him, but not as much. Then why it's bothering him so much after they're in a relationship?

I didn't understand him. He's like two different people.

Isaac is more mature than Nathan at his young age (25). Nathan is definitely need to 'learn from Isaac', big time.

I think the title is make sense after all.

It was an okay read for me, I think. Not that I'm super excited after finished the book, but Isaac is kinda cute and sweet, and I liked him :)

PS.I liked Kenny and George, but still a long way to go. Sigh.

Heather K (dentist in my spare time) says

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A.B. Gayle says

In this era of endless series and sequels, it's refreshing to find a whole swag of standalones.

It means the author has to come up with fresh characters, plot and setting each time. Not easy. But very rewarding when it is done well.

While on the surface this is a series because at least one of the heroes is Jewish and the observance of religion at some point touches on the story, the only other connecting link is that the world they live in is loosely interlinked. So if characters from other books make a cameo appearance, it's more wondering how they got together as a couple or what their story is. Hence the books can be read in any order. In fact, the last in the series actually began first.

They are not cut and paste jobs either. Each story is unique and the characters are quite different.

There are no MM stereotypes or cliches.

Sure older professor and student has been done before, and if that is all you see in a story then you might not agree with me, but I love the detail the author has painted around that central premise.

These feel like real people, not story book characters. I liked the way the author took her time to establish their personalities, because this is what makes each rendition of this religious holiday theme different.

Nathan, a professor of ecology, is painfully aware that his youth is slipping away and fears that he is destined to spend the rest of his life alone. At first, the constant attention of a young good looking student is flattering, but Nathan is a stickler for the rules so he ensures lines are not crossed. Isaac is smart. He keeps pushing at this barrier, feeling correctly that they can meet each other on equal terms one day.

But they're not equals in other ways. Isaac is a student having difficulty paying for his education. Nathan is comfortably off.

Isaac was thrown out by his family when he came out. While Nathan comes from a supportive family. He even noted that Isaac, being Jewish and attractive was exactly the sort of boy his mother would approve of. Then something happens that neither can prevent, and the attraction that had been simmering explodes to the surface. Once there and acknowledged, they need to work through the ramifications as it pertains to their lives.

As the author states in the acknowledgements, the religious context comes from Passover, and the fact that it celebrates the freedom from bondage.

Religion per se isn't so much present as an observance of religion. This mirrors Nathan's observance of the rules pertaining to relationships with students and men much younger than himself. It also allows us a glimpse into the lives of others. And isn't that one of the reasons we read?

Dev is gradually re-editing these books as they come out of contract and reissuing them. Chronologically, it was the second book she ever wrote and like most authors, her skills have developed since then, allowing her to see flaws and places where it could be improved. I have only read the latest version and it is more than fine.

Anke says

4.5*. *sigh* I just finished reading and have to say, what a wonderful book! I liked Nathan and Isaac with all their insecurities. I especially liked the insta-attraction and then the careful building of the relationship. The writing was wonderful and I'm glad that I have already bought the other book by this author:) I hope, she is busy writing more!

Natalie says

Beautifully written, with a rich cast of supporting characters. The first-person narrative works really well here, and Nate's "voice" is so appealing. I saw very clearly why he fell in love with Isaac. Bonus points for sex scenes that are genuinely sensual, full of wonder and discovery. I'm a sucker for age-difference stories, and this is a great one.

Elizabetta says

"The first rule of ecology is that small shifts beget big change. Everything is connected." So teaches Nathan Kohn.

And so unfolds the story of a college teacher of aquatic/environmental studies and his student. What is special here is how the author weaves in Nathan's work and his Jewish background giving his character depth and color. The fact that Isaac, his undergrad student, comes from the same background completes the strong thread that runs through this story. Also welcome is that these two were able to (mostly) respect the teacher/student relationship in their deepening attraction to each other. They have bigger issues to tackle. Nathan must find a way to live with Isaac's past, taking a big step towards building something together.

I greatly enjoyed this quiet, gentle story though it took a little getting used to the delivery. While Nathan's first-person point of view is a bit risky -- it is simple and straightforward and he can come across as a bit cold or analytical -- in the end it worked for me. He is, after all, a scientist and a quantitative thinker and it was really in keeping with the character of the story. There were a couple of abrupt transitions between scene changes but nothing too serious. There really isn't a lot of angst here and what there is seems invented. When Nathan forces Isaac to go dancing at a bar where they encounter some of Isaac's past sex clients, Nathan ends up picking a fight with Isaac that makes him come off as a putz. Of course he sees the error of his ways, Isaac is a sweet boy after all who had to make hard decisions. Little steps, though. And big changes. It's all connected, it's all good.

Ele says

****2.5 stars****

I can't quite explain why I didn't like this one. I liked *some* parts, but others didn't work at all.

Note that my knowledge of Jewish customs or aquatic/environmental studies is close to zero, but this had nothing to do with not liking the book.

The writing put me off at first. The first person POV was monotonous and the dialogue was almost non-existent. It got better later, but I never managed to fully connect.

The story is told exclusively from Nathan's, the professor, POV. I really needed Isaac's POV. Nathan was not a reliable narrator. He carried too many baggage from previous relationships and frankly, he didn't always make sense.

For someone who didn't want to get involved with a student, he didn't try very hard (and believe me, I'm not one of those people who think a teacher-student relationship is always a no, as long as everyone is an adult and there is consent).

I understand having problems with Isaac's profession but his hissy fit was way too immature.

And, like another reviewer pointed out, it seems that all Chicago's gay population had visited this club. Every single time Isaac left the house, he would bump into a customer: /

I don't know, maybe it's just me. But for the most part of it, this story didn't work for me.

5amWriterMan says

A beautiful May-December love story between a college professor and his former student. A perfect story for

anyone who enjoys more romance than sex in an MM story.

Mandy*reads obsessively* says

I'm a sucker for rent boy stories, what can I say? :)

This one is a bit different since Nate is Isaac's teacher at the University.

They find each other attractive but know that at least as long as they are student/teacher nothing can come of it.

Well.....they meet again at Isaac's place of work and Nathan's moral hesitation flies out the window.

The story was written well but I was missing something. I don't think I ever really cared about either of the two MC's very much and I really wanted too.

I didn't like Nathan, at at least two different times in this book I really wanted to give him a piece of my mind.

He is at least 15 years Isaac's senior yet acts very immature and hypocritical at times.

It was also amazing that in Chicago Isaac can't seem to go anywhere without running into clients! I liked Isaac but since the story is told from Nate's POV I didn't really get to know him as well as I would have liked to. I'm sure I would have liked it better from his vantage point. Nate's mother was great, I liked her!

I'm not sure why, but George Michael's 'Teacher' kept running through my head while reading this book and I guess that played a role, because for me at least the song conveyed more than this story did.

I will read more from Ms Bentham, because she writes well and I liked her Moving In Rhythm book.

Denise H. says

***** This is a delight, gentle and heartwarming. ***** Two very different men, 42 yr. old Professor Nathan, and 25 yr. old student Isaac, both gay and Jewish, meet at school.

They are drawn to each other but Nathan won't breach the school rules and date a student. Isaac is working hard to graduate. This unlikely pair is so cute, sexy, and adorable, as the tension builds, and after graduation they act on their desires.

Each has had hardships, and through conversations they get to know each other. Isaac worked at a gay strip club. Nathan's family is open and accepting. Isaac doesn't have contact with his family, because they threw him out after finding he was gay. Remarkable tenderness, loving, understandings, and self evaluations. The world dishes out obstacles.

After the note about the author, there is a segment you don't want to miss. It is like an epilogue, but not. But it's important ! :)

Highly recommended !! ENJOY !!!

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Bitchie says

Ordinarily, I love student/professor stories, add in that the student is a hooker, and this should be golden!

Unfortunately, I was kind of bored through a lot of this, and just when I was really getting into it, Nathan did something that pissed me off. I also don't get rimming but not blowing without a condom.

Also, third book this week I've read with a character named Nathan or some variation of it. New trend in book names?

Jess Candela says

If I hadn't lived a student-professor-waiting-for-the-student-to-graduate situation, I probably would have enjoyed this book more. Or maybe not. There's so much that could have been done with that situation, showing the growing intellectual connection over months of office-hours discussions, leading to meandering conversations, developing friendship and emotional intimacy. Then the sexual tension waiting for graduation makes sense.

This story didn't seem to me to show *why* Isaac and Nathan were so drawn to each other. Physical attraction, sure. But what drew them together so intensely that it was worth waiting for after graduation? Why not just find someone else more convenient and equally attractive?

It seemed far too much like insta-love for no apparent reason to me, so it probably wouldn't have wowed me anyway. And the fact that they actually did have a sexual moment together before graduation? Ick. Ew, ew, EWWWW! No. Uh uh. Not cool, no matter how you frame it.

Add in prose that has a disconcerting tendency to suddenly turn purple at the end of every sex scene, and a few other seemingly random moments, and this made for some uncomfortable reading. And yet, I cared about the characters and enjoyed it anyway.

Ami says

3.5 stars

Hmmm, technically, I can't find something wrong, however, emotionally, I'm not feeling the story as much.

I do appreciate the idea of having Isaac, the student, working as rent-boy. It gives the twist of the teacher/student trope. But, considering that this is a 1st person narration, everything I need to care about the story, including the relationship, depends on Nathan's voice ... and , I don't know ... I feel like Nathan is taking the fact of Isaac's profession, with such a stride, slightly lack of emotion.

I like Isaac, though, he's not wallowing his situation, or being defensive, or too angsty. He is working himself for something better. Maybe if I get his voice as well, instead of just Nathan, I can get connected to the story better.

Simsala says

The umpteenth version of professor falls in love with his student.
This time with a rent boy twist but nothing new to really grab me...
