



Vital Sign

J.L. Mac

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I used to have a great life. My little world was bright. I had no complaints. My perfectly simple life made the fall from grace that much more devastating. I plummeted from the heavenly little bubble that I shared with Jake. I fell fast and hard straight into the fiery pits of hell. The knowledge of how things used to be is a bittersweet torture that refuses me even one moment of respite. I live in a painful reverie that I can't escape.

I had it good once.

That's gone now.

All of it disappeared like vapor into the ether. I'm a lost woman, wandering through grief and struggling to come to terms with my new title: widow. My family says I need understanding and closure. I say a cigarette and a bottle of wine is a much better option for instant gratification.

I'm the awkward, depressed one standing in the corner making everyone around me miserably uncomfortable. I'm the one with vacant eyes that society strives to help but can't. I'm the one who hands out tight smiles and derisive snorts. I'm the widow adrift in this world with no direction. No meaning. No hope. No vital sign.

Sadie sets out on a journey to healing without knowing that things will get far worse before they get better. Despite her general indifference to organ donation, she finds herself on a journey to seek out the only people who benefited from her husband's tragic death.

Resentment runs rampant as she meets the thriving organ recipients. Anger and jealousy spiral, sending the delicate structure of Sadie's emotions into a tailspin.

Alexander McBride got a second chance—one that he didn't necessarily want. Alexander is a game changer for Sadie. She hates him for his health but can't help feeling at home in his presence. He soothes her grief in a way that is intoxicating, addictive even.

The heart that once fell in love with her now resides in Alexander McBride's chest. It's a circumstance that forces her to wage an internal war fueled by grief, anger, guilt, love, lust, and loyalty.

Sadie must discover the things that are vital to going on with her life if she has any hope of finding her way through the all-consuming grief that dominates every waking moment.

Vital Sign Details

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From Reader Review Vital Sign for online ebook

Theresa Alberts says

Received an ARC

Wow! Heartbreaking...heartwarming...tragic....beautiful...there aren't enough words to describe the feelings that this book invoked within me while reading. There were times that I laughed and other times I got so teary eyed that I had to stop to get a tissue because the words on my kindle were getting blurry. J.L. Mac hit it out of the ballpark with this one! It is most definitely in my top ten favorite books of all time (and as I told the author I am an avid reader with over 1000 books on my kindle). A book had to be amazing for it to replace one of my already favorites in the top ten and this story did it. My heart broke in the book for Sadie who's life became a struggle every day after she was faced with a tragedy she never expected in the first chapter of the book. Even with her family rallying around her to support her through her emotional journey, she fought against the light that appeared in the darkness. She did very thing she was "supposed" to do, smiled when she should, listened when she didn't want to and accepted "help" even though it was the last thing she wanted. It was only after meeting Zander, a meeting she didn't want in the first place but had arranged to appease her loving mother that everything changed for her and she stepped toward the light with small almost undetected baby steps. Zander, what can I say about him. My heart broke for him too, with the guilt and unworthiness that he carried throughout most of the story. It was only meeting Sadie that gave him a sense to so walk toward a light and start to actually live his life instead of just going through the motions as the "black sheep" that he labelled himself. I could not put this book down and finished it in one sitting. I was cheering for these characters from the very first page and I couldn't be more happy about how the story unfolded and how it concluded as well. I absolutely love love loved it and would highly highly recommend everyone read it! Amazingly fantastic job JL Mac!!!!!! Can't wait for your next book!!!!!!!

Talltree says

4.25 stars!

Patrycja says

[Yes (hide spoiler)]

Farah *Professor Dean's Beauty* says

I cannot even tell anyone the amount of times I fell asleep while reading this book!!

So I started this the day I left for vacation and one would think it be cool to read on the planes/trains/ airport waiting or just hanging around...

Every single time in any of the above locations I tried to read I fell asleep.
Dead asleep so I guess I'll have to thank the author for that.

Frankly I cannot even remember most of this book even though I read it all.
Not good for me. Good luck to everyone else!

Mo says

I used to have a great life. My little world was bright. I had no complaints. My perfectly simple life made the fall from grace that much more devastating.

I liked this one. Sadie has been grieving for 2 years since the death of her husband, Jake.

All of it disappeared like vapor into the ether. I'm a lost woman, wandering through grief and struggling to come to terms with my new title: widow.

There is an instant attraction between her and Zander McBride but the guilt will not let her live her life and be happy.

I'm the awkward, depressed one standing in the corner making everyone around me miserably uncomfortable.

Sadie got on my nerves a bit. I just wanted her to get over herself and get on with life. I know, I know, how would I react if I was in her situation – no idea. But if Zander McBride was willing and able

Resentment runs rampant as she meets the thriving organ recipients. Anger and jealousy spiral, sending the delicate structure of Sadie's emotions into a tailspin.

I see a lot of 4 and 5 star reviews. There was just something missing for me. I did like it but it did not blow me away.

Sadie must discover the things that are vital to going on with her life if she has any hope of finding her way through the all-consuming grief that dominates every waking moment.

I will probably check out more books by this author as she is a talented writer.

Jennifer G. says

OOHHHHH MYYYYYY!!!!!!

I was given an ARC for an honest review, thank you J.L.Mac.

5+ heart wrenching vital stars!!!! If I could I would give it 10.

This book is at the top of all books in 2014 so far. I mean dammnnnn.

This is my first book hangover in a long time.

I abso-fricken-lutely LOVED this book. This is one of those books you just want to never ever end, like never.

All the characters were awesome, I mean ALL of them. Of course Zander stole my heart as well, and if you read this book and he doesn't steal yours, then you should probably stop reading, and find something else to do like garden are something.

I cried, really ugly cried, smiled, laughed, and got angry, yes I was an emotional wreck. But I loved every minute of it, and it kept me on my toes and so damn curious to see what was next.

I never give a review about the book, that's what these authors write blurbs for. But I will tell you, put everything else on hold to get it and read it. Seriously, housework can wait, turn your phones off, feed the kids later, haha just kidding about the kids part, mine are 22 & 18 so feed thereselves. LOL

Not sure how the hell I'm supposed to pick out my next book now, not sure if it will compare to this one.

THANK YOU J.L. MAC for the opportunity of viewing one your prize possesions, thank you for your trust, and your talent. Thank you for VITAL SIGN!!!!

I think J.L. Mac will be in the category of an all time (living) legend to me, like Elvis are something. Because she is just awesome like that!!!

And I would also like to give a big shout out to TBM for hauling our very own J.L. Mac to a nice cabin

somewhere, and allowed her to write/finish this awesome book. He sees talent and makes it known so the rest of us can enjoy a good, no a GREAT fricken book.

Ya'll work great together, keep it up, and keep the books coming. Fans like me love it more than you know.

bibliophile (Romance Addict) says

DNF at 40%

I tried, I really did. I forced myself to go back and complete reading this, but every time I started to relax, I got annoyed by something. It just never worked for me. I didn't like anything about the book, so I guess it was very hard for me to complete. In the end, I decided I shouldn't force myself to read a book I wasn't intrigued by, or enjoyed because life is too short!

So I've watched a Korean drama called Falling For Innocence that has the same kind of story. The drama was very beautifully done. I loved the story of the drama, and when I started reading this, I was very excited to read something like it. I wanted to experience the same feelings I had when I watched the TV show, but I guess it didn't work. I was very disappointed because this had creeped me out. I felt like the book was way too fast paced when it shouldn't be, and very slow paced where it shouldn't be. It was very frustrating for me to read.

Story: After Jake's death, his family decide to have his body parts donated to others who are In need. Years pass and Sadie is never happy again. Then, her ex-in laws ask her to meet up with the people who were advantaged by her husbands death (the people who got his body parts). Instead of feeling like her husband saved a life, her sadness grows until she meets the guy who has the heart, Zander.

Well, I would say the story is very unique, but after reading this, I have to say it wasn't unique in a good way. First of all, Sadie was very *dump, selfish, stupid, negative*, and I couldn't point out one good quality about her personality. She was naive, and as much as I pushed myself to like her, I couldn't. A character should have flaws, I agree with this, but a character shouldn't be *too* flawed. I mean seriously! Here are some examples that would show how the woman isn't likable.

“A dismal feeling washes over me and I feel nothing but hatred for the blue sky above me, the flowers growing, the green grass, and the oblivious little birds singing from their perches in the trees”

Another reason I didn't like her is the fact that she points out her husbands heart way too many times, it made

feel creeped out.

“But knowing that Zander is out there waiting for me? With Jake’s heart in his chest? It’s kind of like he’s here with me. It’s his heart. It may be in Zander’s perfectly defined chest, but it’s still Jake’s.”

I mean, I know it’s your husbands heart inside the poor guy’s chest, but puhlease! It is way too creepy to think of it this way. Let’s not forget about the insta-love, insta-lust between Zander and Sadie. Insta-lust is even too slow for what happened in this book. The women had a few words with the guy, and then he made her different right away! Could it possibly be his heart?

“The water is perfect. I flip the drain toggle upward and water quickly begins to fill the tub. I step in with Zander’s shirt still pressed to my face. The tub is oversized and perfect for me to sink down in. The cool ceramic coating sends a shiver through me as I get comfortable. I rest against the back of it, letting the shirt trail down the front of me.”

“I haven’t had an orgasm in two years. The last time I had any type of sexual release was the night Jake and I were shot.”

I find it quite hard to believe that she never had any sexual feelings in two years, but suddenly after exchanging few words with the guy, she’s feeling sexual. Suddenly. It doesn’t make any sense, and I snickered so many times while reading this because a depression that deep would NOT be treated that quickly! That’s not possible, or even a little bit cute. It’s not even believable.

I'm sorry for offending anyone by writing this review. I'm just stating my honest opinion right here, and also pointing out what made this book very not-ok for me. However, it might be one of your favorite books. I'm not discouraging anyone to read this, instead, I'm just saying that this wasn't for me. I didn't enjoy it, or like anything about it, but that's my opinion. It's actually an **unpopular** opinion since so many people liked it.

Oh last but not least, let's not forget the OVER-SEXUALLY-UNBELIEVABLE-DESCRIPTION.

“Zander makes the act of eating look like a visual display of male perfection and all but guaranteed sexual prowess. I imagine he’s sinfully exquisite in bed.”

The guy might be hot for all I care. Seriously though, not every person who knows how to eat is good at bed. I mean what kind of logic is that, Sadie? These two acts aren't even comparable!

Anyways, enough of my rambling. I **recommend** this book to dark, sad book lovers. Although this wasn't for me, it might be 'it' for you!

***P*u*r*p*l*e* Masochist says**

****Arc provided by the author in exchange for honest review****

This review is posted on Way Too Hot Books

"He died, other people got a chance to live, and I was left to stand awkwardly in the corner at every holiday, birthday, wedding, and reunion following it."

Drawings at Zindy-Zone.

Every loss is hard and painful, but **death of a loved one** is the hardest of them all. It is something that cuts you deep and marks you forever. A wound so deep which never heals and never stops to hurt. An emptiness that no one and nothing can replace or fill. **Death is something no one can escape and whose final strike is everyone's greatest fear.** We all expect and hope to live a happy and fulfilled life before that final strike, but life has a tendency to slap us in the face and say: guess again.

This is a story about that kind of loss, about the painful and bitter flavor it leaves and about the amount of strength and sacrifice necessary to rise again after that kind of blow. The first thing that caught my attention was of course the beautiful cover and then I read the synopsis and that was it for me. I was lucky enough to get an advanced copy from the author for which I'm grateful, because I liked this story very much and the characters it revolves around. It had me on the brink of tears from the very beginning, having lost that battle a couple of times. It was deeply emotional, heart-breaking, sweet & touching. One of my favorite formulas.

The main heroine is an 26 years old artist **Sadie** who lost her husband in one tragic event and after his death she decided to donate his organs. Two years later and everything changed. She became **shell of a woman** she once was, **deeply broken, full of resent and anger at herself, God, people and world around her.** To please her family and in seek of some type of closure she decides to meet the people who hold a piece of her late husband, one of them being **Alexander McBride**, the patient who got Jake's heart.

"He carries it.

*He is responsible for taking care of it,
but it wasn't that long ago that I slept beside that heart every night.*

I took comfort in that heart.

My world revolved around that heart.

He carries it now, but I've carried that heart too."

Sadie was my favorite character in the story. She was such a sweet and relate-able character with whose thoughts and views about the world and people around I could connect and agree. We get both, Sadie's and Alexander's point of views, but **this is Sadie's story**. A story about her hardest downfall and then slowly rising from the ashes. **Alexander** was also a very likable character, also a broken spirit who comes to Sadie's life when she was at the very bottom and when she least expected it. There are a lot of secrets, grief, tragedy and guilt standing in the way of their happiness, but together maybe they could help each other heal, be each other's anchors.

"The look on her face rips me to pieces.

She's standing there on my boardwalk looking so fucking alone that I wish I could steal the loneliness from her.

I'd take it from her. I don't know why other than the fact that I feel so indebted and responsible for this gorgeous, tormented woman in front of me.

I bite my tongue, literally, shocks of pain bolt me, but I keep quiet.

Somehow I know what she needs in this moment.

Unspoiled silence."

The book was **well-written**, the writing style being so honest and poetic at times which I really liked. When it comes to the story I liked the first half of the book slightly better, because the second half became **a bit cheesy** and Cinderella-alike for my taste, but I didn't mind it this time that much. All in all, very good. **I would recommend it to anyone who loves emotional and romantic stories which leave you with that warm and fuzzy feeling.** This was my first book by this author, but it won't be the last.

Her eyes, her movements, her touch are all her tell

- her story- and I'm rapt,

wondering what her ending is.

Some newly discovered part of me hopes that I'm the main character in Sadie's ending. Not her happily ever after, because she's already had one of those, but maybe I can be her second chance at happiness. I think she could be mine.

♦EXCERPT♦

"If you think for one second that I wanted this, you're wrong," he bellows at me so loudly that I startle. I take a cautious step back but he instantly steps forward, closing the space between us. I can feel the heat and anger radiating from him. His breathing is uneven and he seems to be trembling just as much as I am.

Before I have a chance to even think, he grips his shirt at the front and rips it open sending a few buttons skittering across his floor in all directions. My eyes instinctively look towards the floor to watch where buttons have flown. When I look up, I find myself looking at the angered man who ripped his shirt open like a neanderthal. He steps even closer to me, leaving only an inch or two of space for me to call mine. His eyes bore into me as he shrugs his shoulders up and down a few times, easily slipping out of the fabric. I watch it

drop to the floor and do my best to compose myself.

“Look at it,” he demands and I know exactly what he is talking about. I haven’t seen his scar yet and I’m not quite sure that I am ready to see the marred chest that was split open to welcome in a new heart. It was new to him anyway. It damn sure wasn’t new to me. I have known that heart since childhood. I loved that heart. That’s the heart that loved me right back.

In spite of the growing knot in my throat I look up from the floor to stare straight ahead at a long vertical, deep pink scar. It’s wide and long extending the full length of his sternum.

My head lowers and my eyes drift askew on their own. The sight of his scar makes me sad for him and resentful all at once. Why does he get to live? Why did Jacob have to die? Why do I have this stupid guilt keeping me from ending it all? I know none of this was Alex’s fault. I know that it’s shitty of me to hate him for reasons that make zero sense. Maybe I don’t hate him at all. Maybe I just hate that I feel guilty for being attracted to him. I feel bad that a small part of me is thankful that he is the man who received my husband’s heart.

Tears well in my eyes making me want to hide. I want to hide from everything. Alex hand lifts to cup my cheek and he gently lifts my head to face him. The anger I saw for a moment has been replaced with a look of sympathy.

“I’m glad that you’re alive. I guess I’m just not glad that I am.” My admission feels like it’s more for me than it is for him. He sighs heavily and pulls me to his bare chest with such force that the breath in my lungs rushes out. With my cheek pressed to his chest I sob to the sound of the steady, strong heart that I have loved for so long.

Mandy says

Beautiful! That is the word I think best describes Vital Sign. This book was absolutely beautiful. I have never cried so much while reading a book but this story just really got to me. Sadie is an amazing woman who lost her husband and is overcome with grief. My heart completely broke for her. The love that she and Jake had was amazing. I don't know how you can ever get over that kind of loss but I love the connection she made with Zander - it was magical. I just really loved this book - it touched my heart and will stay with me for a long time. Highly recommend!

Lelyana says

*Though I try to get you out of my head
The truth is I got lost without you
And since then I've been waking up to*

*Only half a blue sky (only half a blue sky)
Kinda there but not quite*

*I'm walking around with just one shoe
I'm half a heart without you.... (Half a Heart/One Direction)*

This is the kind of book you will never get tired to read it over and over again

***** 5+++ favorite book-loved Zander and Sadie stars!*****

"You are my truth. You are my constant. You are my proof of life. You are my Vital Sign.
With you, I more than breathe - I live. Please forgive me."

The main problem with a really good book and a book that really touched your heart and made you taste a **bookgasm**....is that you don't know what you will write on your review.

And this happens to me all the time.

This time included.

I was hooked since the very beginning. I can feel Sadie. I can feel Zander. Two lost soul meant to be together, with a hand of faith.

And ..damn... I can feel the strong chemistry between them instantly.

Was it because of Jake's heart that beating inside Zander....or was it just **pure love** that bonded them together?

Damn, this book was intense, I cried so many times, I have goosebumps over Jake's letter and had an ugly cry.

I loved how much Sadie loved her husband Jake, she not that easy to let go...until she's finally have a courage to read Jake's letter...and let go...

I've been on Sadie's position before and I know it very damn hard to let go and move on...it took years... and I loved how Sadie cope with her situation and her love for Zander.

And Zander..sigh...what can I say about this so patient, adorable, easy to love man...he's perfection!And Sadie's very lucky having him and loved by him...

There's so many sadness and bitterness I felt and cried for them.
This is definitely will ho to my favorite list!

Bookhooking (Tanya Childress) says

Five Valuable, Vital Sign Stars

Have you ever lost someone you love? Of course you have. We all have, but not all of us have lost someone, our husband, the person we plan to spend the rest of our lives with, at the very young, tender age of 26.

Sadie has lost her husband, the love of her life, her other half. She is left with so much grief, anger, loneliness, guilt, overwhelming sadness and no hope. All of the emotions that one would expect to come with such a tragedy.

In my opinion Vital Sign was one of the very best books I have read to describe, realistically, everything from emotional, devastating heartbreak to sadness, anger and ultimately the possibility of trying to heal. I find myself speechless in trying to write this review, to find the appropriate words.

I did, however, find that reading this was very valuable to me in terms of helping and giving me a better understanding of what it's like for those that have been in this position because, quite frankly, I have no idea what I would do or how I would feel and I don't think anyone else would either until it happens.

Sadie hates life, she hates people and pretty much just, everything. She has no hope nor does she give a damn. She is not a happy person and my heart broke for her.

"My grass is freshly cut. My driveway is neatly edged. You'd think that someone who actually gives a damn lives here at 803 Chestnut Lane. Not so much. Not even close."

"I'm fucking sick of life and I haven't made a single effort at hiding it."

Sadie struggles, daily, through the life she has now, adjusting to things she never thought she would have to adjust to and just trying to move forward. Sadly, she just doesn't know who she is anymore and basically terrified of many things.

"Everyone was thrilled with where life was going and I was trying to adjust to sleeping alone."

With some encouragement from her family, she has decided to meet three people that benefited from her husbands organs, namely, his liver, his kidney and finally his heart. This seems difficult no doubt and in Sadie's mind so unfair. She hates them all! Or so she thinks.

Then we meet Zander. I read the first email exchange between Zander and Sadie and that was all it took for me to fall in love with him. Crazy? maybe (shrugs) but nah you will see, trust me!

"I know his name is Alexander McBride, he's twenty-nine years old, and he's the person that's walking around with Jake's heart in his chest. I dislike him already."

and Sadie meets Zander.

Intense and emotional come to mind.

"I wondered who's world had just fallen apart as mine came together. I wondered who the person was that loved the donor most. I wondered who it was that had me feeling an insurmountable heap of guilt simply for needing the transplant and then living through it. I wondered who I owed my life to."

WOW

I am now speechless. The two of them related to each other in more ways than one. The time they spent together was beautiful and passionate yet challenging, especially for Sadie. Can you imagine? The intensity of it all! I would love to tell you so much more but what fun would that be?

"Whatever I am, whatever he is, we are one in the same." ~Sadie

You need to experience this awesome read for yourself. I did not want it to end. You will find yourself completely engulfed in their world, asking questions, getting frustrated, struggling right along with them and ultimately, completely falling in love.

Can Sadie let Jake go? Can she move on without him? Will she learn to live and just be. Can she truly be happy in her new found life and will it be with Zander?

"I don't hate you," I cry. "I'm glad that you're alive. I guess-I guess that sometimes I'm just not glad that I am." My admission feels like it's more for me than it is for him.

What has Zander been through in his life to need a heart transplant at such a young age? How will he cope with his feelings for Sadie, can he express them and not scare her away?

Yep, I could torture you all day and leave you in complete suspense, but don't let me do that to you! Go get a copy of Vital Sign and read it for yourself. My only disappointment was it had to end and I didn't want it too!

I cried reading this book and I cried writing this review ,but I also laughed, smiled and felt all the emotion wrapped up in Sadie and Zander's world! We all feel and take in things so differently, but I challenge you and encourage you to read this book. Yes, it may be difficult for some, but I feel, in my heart, that it is totally worth it. I take my reading very serious and I always want to walk away with something. I walked away from reading Vital Sign with a whole lot!

In spite of myself, you are my truth. you are my constant. You are my proof of life. You are my vital sign. With you, I more than breathe-I live.

It's no secret I am a huge fan of J L Mac's. She rocks, as a person and as an author. I love all her books. Thank you, J L Mac, for your stories, your friendship (even if we haven't met in person yet), the complimentary copy of this book and by all means thank you for this wonderful, emotional and powerful journey that is quite realistic

and

Last but not least thank you for Zander! oh and Damon ;0)!

A couple more quotes I highlighted.

Everyone needs forgiveness, even from themselves.

I had no way of knowing that resisting grief also meant resisting life.

This is a standalone and a favorite book of mine for 2014!. The main characters are some I will never forget and I also enjoyed the secondary characters as well, along with the role that each of them played in this story.

Zander goes on my book boyfriend list too!!

?ι??ισρ?ι?ια {?ιηg???? & ?ø??η fσ??v??} says

This was most definitely one of my top ten favourite books of all time; their struggles were intoxicating. It was the most AMAZING and real feeling book I've read in a long, long time.

Kim says

This book grabbed me from the first page, had me totally on guard, then ripped me apart. We learned what happened on the fateful night that ruined Sadie's life.

And then two years later, at the insistence of her concerned family, Sadie is on a journey to meet several of the people helped through her husband, Jake's organ donation.

She is angry, depressed, lost, and striking out. Her life has no meaning for her. She sees nothing good or beautiful in the fact that these people lived due to Jake's death.

But then she meets Alexander Hamilton, one of the recipients. He is charismatic, handsome, alpha-like, and has a bit of an attitude himself. He isolates himself and feels guilt about his past and current situation. He thinks he is unworthy of his second chance and has secrets.

She is drawn to him although she does not want to be. It makes her feel more guilty, confused and edgy. He feels an immediate pull to her as well, but sees her turmoil and pain.

They both are bothered, broken, and stuck. But something about the other compels them and causes dormant feelings and reactions to awaken.

I loved Zander. His unfiltered thoughts and determined alpha personality made me smile. He had a checkered past, notoriety, and family issues. These were slowly unraveled throughout the story. But he had such guilt about the past that he just withdrew into himself. His vulnerability and self hatred broke my heart. I just wanted to soothe him.

Sadie was a bit much to take at times. Her own depression, guilt, loss, and self loathing was hard to handle. But it was understandable due to what she had been through and the depth of her loss. But she also had a snarky and sarcastic sense of humor that broke through at times. She had a long emotional journey and needed to face who she had become. And Zander gave her reason to take a closer look at her life and consider making difficult changes.

Their path was in no way easy or uncomplicated. They both had such emotional baggage, fears, and insecurities that they had to overcome in their own ways and own time. They struggled, pushed, pulled, denied, became consumed, and scared each other senseless. But they also challenged each other to break free of the past binding them and strangling the life out of them.

This was raw, angry, powerful and heart breaking. But it was also an inspirational story of healing, hope, and second chances. They were two broken people unable to move forward alone, but somehow helped the other begin to face their lives, begin to heal, and move on. It was emotional and dark at times, but funny, sweet, sexy and hopeful at others.

This had a unique and intriguing plot line and characters with real depth, flaws, and personal demons. My emotions were all over the place. I loved getting both of their points of view so I could see their inner conflicts and true feelings. I was completely invested in their story the entire time. I got frustrated and sad at times, but also smiled, swooned, and fell for the broken hero with a slightly used heart of gold.

Thanks to J. L. Mac for providing me with a complimentary copy in exchange for an honest review. Will be posted at Reviews by Tammy and Kim.

Jen~KU Book Reviews says

4.5 Stars!!!!

Losing someone you love is earth shattering. Your heart stops. Time stops. The world keeps moving, yet you're standing still. It hurts to breathe. You would do anything, would give anything to go back in time. Vital Signs was a heartbreakingly beautiful story sharing Sadie Parker's journey through grief and healing. Yes, it may sound sad, but is a must read incredible story!!!

Sadie is in love with her life-long sweetheart—her soul mate, her husband. They have a beautiful life. One tragic night, her world is shattered. Her husband Jake is murdered right in front of her. Soul crushing, devastating... I cried like a baby. She hurts. She doesn't understand—why him, why her. Jake's organs are donated and on the insistence of her family, she sets out to meet several of the people who received his organs. These meetings are not what Sadie wanted. She feels a lot of anger and resentment towards the people that lived when her husband couldn't.

“How am I supposed to let go of Jake if there are pieces of him still out here, living on in some perfect stranger?”

Alexander “Zander” McBride has had a wild past. Drinking, partying, lots of women and sex, he feels undeserving of the heart transplant he received. Having lived in the limelight of his Governor father and being famous himself, he retreated into a sheltered life, trying so hard to resist reverting back to the life he was so used to living.

The day comes where Sadie is to meet the person who received Jake's heart. Zander affects her more than she ever thought anyone could. The guilt and the torment she feels has her world spinning. The spark between Sadie and Zander is undeniable. They are drawn to one another like a moth to a flame. She fights these feelings—afraid that if she gives into them, she is being disloyal to her husband. She promised to love her husband til the day she died. How can she possibly move on? How can it be okay to love another? But then he says things like this...

“I don’t think it’s a secret that I want nothing more than to kiss you, touch you, feel you. You’re all I think about...”

Just wow!! He was perfect! I loved Zander. He was hot, sweet, kind and patient with Sadie. The moments where he tried to push down Sadie’s walls, you wanted to scream, just hoping he would knock them down. Sadie’s pain was hard to witness. It was frustrating when she’d shut down, so afraid to move—afraid to let Jake go. The push and the pull and the pain that she feels, you feel. The times they shared together were amazing though and Zander would give anything for more time.

“Sadie Parker makes me want more. More hours in the day. More things to make her smile. More life. More of her.”

This is by far one of the most emotional books I’ve read. I laughed, I cried, I felt emotions I’ve been trying to hide way deep down inside myself. You will ache, you will be frustrated, but most of all—you will feel. Grateful for what you have, hopeful for your future. You will become attached to these characters and hope they can overcome all their obstacles.

J.L. Mac wrote a story that will have you glued to your kindle from start to finish. Her writing is flawless and her characters are perfectly imperfect. Loved this book!!!

Aestas Book Blog says

My casting for Zander (Alexander McBride)

**** FULL REVIEW NOW POSTED ****

***Vital Sign* was a beautiful, emotional story of finding second chances in the most unlikely of places.**

From the moment I heard about this book, I knew I *had* to read it. The synopsis made my heart squeeze and yet also gave me this jolt of excitement because this was a type of storyline I had never read before!!

The story followed a woman, Sadie, whose beloved husband, Jake, was murdered in front of her one hellish night. Now faced with a life without him, Sadie spiraled downward into depression. At only 26 years old, she already felt like her life was over and was filled with anger, resentment, and pain.

“Everyone was thrilled with where life was going and I was trying to adjust to sleeping

alone.... I'm still here and I love my family. I just don't love life at the moment."

But Jake had been an organ donor and in a last ditch attempt to help bring her some closure, her family convinced her to try and reach out to some of the recipients in hopes that seeing their happiness would give her comfort. Sadie was sure this wouldn't work though -- how was it fair that they got to live but the love of her life didn't? For her, knowing that they existed was in some ways even worse...

"How am I supposed to let go of Jake if there are pieces of him still out there, living on in some perfect stranger?"

She finally agreed to meet up with three of them. She didn't believe it would help but she was trying to do it for her family's sake. The first two meetings went well but didn't help her in the least. The last meeting though was with the man who got Jake's heart... and this line from the blurb gave me *shivers!!*

"The heart that once fell in love with her now resides in Alexander McBride's chest."

OMG!! And *that* was the line that sold me on the book!!

Looking back, I have to say that the description of Sadie's emotional journey throughout this book was so well done. She went through the utterly devastating loss of her soul mate and while life went on for everyone around her, for her it stood still. I felt like I completely understood her pain and anger at facing the heart-breaking truth that *nothing* would ever bring her husband back. Nothing.

"A girl like me doesn't lose a husband like Jake and recover from it."

Only a few chapters in and I already had tears in my eyes. This book certainly tugged my heart strings many times over and I really appreciated that the first quarter of the book focused just on Sadie because it really gave me a chance to connect with her pain and feel where she was coming from so that by the time I met Alexander, I felt just as emotionally conflicted as she did.

From the first time I met him though, I had a huge smile on my face. He was nothing like what she expected and she had this kind of double emotional reaction to him -- partly because he literally had a part of her husband in him, and partly because he was charming and she was drawn to him on his own merit as well.

"I can't believe I'm standing here so close to Jake's heart."

As it turned out, there was a lot more to Alexander McBride than met the eye. His wild past had come to an abrupt end after his heart transplant and he'd retreated away from the world and his family to deal with his new lifestyle alone. I really fell in love with him though -- he was sweet but with an edge of dominance and also an air of mystery... and I very much appreciated that after we met him, we got to see his POV.

"I'm the most fucked up person I know. I want her. I want the wife of the man who died and donated his heart so that I could go on with my screwed up existence. It doesn't seem right even to an asshole like me."

I loved the natural protectiveness he felt towards Sadie and I loved the way they just *connected*. But there were a lot of conflicting emotions in the mix and a lot of feelings to sort out between them.

"I want to be touched. I want to be held. I want Zander, the man carrying my husband's heart, to wrap me up in him. I want to pretend for a while that I can have Jake back in the form of Zander."

There were many emotionally charged scenes as Sadie struggled to find the balance between her love for and loyalty to her deceased husband as well as her growing attraction to and connection with the man who now had his heart.

"My attraction to Zander is so much more than physical, though. It's all of him including the heart that is now, physically his. He carries it. He is responsible for taking care of it, but it wasn't that long ago that I slept beside that heart every night. I took comfort in that heart. My world revolved around that heart. He carries it now, but I've carried that heart too. I was once responsible for seeing that it was kept safe. Just in a different way."

Overall, this was a really sweet read. What I really appreciated about this story as a whole was that it was very low-angst and really just focused on these two characters finding their way in this difficult situation life had put them in. I also really liked that there was no 'bad guy' or any force that ever came between them allowing the main issue genuinely to revolve around the emotional conflict of the situation. I loved the way it all came together in the end and really felt like their story had come full circle.

"Some newly discovered part of me hopes that I'm the main character in Sadie's ending. Not her happily ever after, because she's already had one of those, but maybe I can be her second chance at happiness. I think she could be mine. I'd bet on it."

Rating: 4.5 stars. Standalone (with epilogue).

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