



A Heart for Robbie

J.P. Barnaby

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Waiting for someone else's child to die so yours can live is the worst kind of Hell

Celebrated Young Adult author Julian Holmes pits the heroic characters in his Black Heart series against all different kinds of monsters. But when a critical heart defect threatens his son's life, he finds he has no champion. No amount of books, classes, or practice can prepare Julian for the fight to save his beautiful son's life.

Suddenly there are hospitals, transplant lists, and the nightmare of insurance red tape to navigate. In the midst of his trouble, Julian meets Simon Phelps, the insurance coordinator for Robbie's case. Simon lives so deep in the closet he might never find his way out, but he dreams of exactly what Julian has. Then one night, drunken need and desperation brings them together, and a new fight begins.

A Heart for Robbie Details

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From Reader Review A Heart for Robbie for online ebook

Christy says

The fact that I knew 'A Heart for Robbie' was going to be an emotional and heartrending story in no way, shape, or form lessened my desire to read it. J.P. Barnaby has written so many different types of books and each one I've read has produced some form of an emotional response, be it tears or laughter. In this book, the author has taken her own real life experience and written about it to share with others. I can't begin to imagine the strength of character that takes. The author has said in an interview that writing about Robbie was therapy and I truly hope she received the catharsis she so truly deserves.

What should be the happiest day of Julian's life, the birth of his son, instead has been filled with fear, anxiety, helplessness, and confusion. Robbie was rushed straight to NICU immediately following his birth as he was struggling to breathe on his own. Then the doctors had Robbie airlifted to the children's hospital for more intense help by a pediatric cardiologist. Through these many hours I can't begin to understand how Julian is feeling. Everyone is rushing around trying so hard to save his son, but Julian has no idea what exactly is wrong or what he needs to be doing. It's so easy for me, as a reader, to want to hate the doctors for being so dispassionate when they tell Julian that Robbie has a serious heart deformity and without a transplant he'll die, but as someone who has spent a lot of time around medical professionals, I understand that's how many of them handle these devastating cases. None of that helps Julian, though, when he's just gotten this miracle and now he could easily lose him, and even if they do the transplant there's no guarantee Robbie will live. A parent's worst nightmare.

Julian is a very successful young adult author, but having money isn't going to miraculously cure his son. In this situation, everyone is equal and social stature, money, power, etc. mean nothing when a baby's life is on the line. Simon is the insurance specialist who works for the hospital and, of course, is a member of Robbie's transplant team. Simon is deep, deep, deep in the closet, and his life consists of work and his volunteer efforts at a youth center, and the strain of keeping his two lives separate is really beginning to wear on him. His mother is a frightening woman who is determined to have him meet some nice girl, get married, and give her grandchildren. He's so very terrified of losing his family if he's honest because then he'd really be all alone. *"Is it scary outside the closet?" Simon's eyes widened at his slip and the recognition in Julian's eyes.* Thus begins a tentative friendship as a part of Simon so desperately wants to be out and proud like Julian, and Julian finds comfort in Simon's strength. Then one night of too many beers and too much loneliness on both their parts, changes everything.

I'm not sure I have the words to express how amazing I think this book is. Not just all the parts involving the struggle with Robbie and his illness, but all the other incredible parts of Julian's journey. The advice and support from his parents about parenting, mistakes, and fears. Watching how Julian conjures his characters from his mind and talks to them about his books and storylines. The seamless and beautiful way that Julian and Simon mesh and the fact that each makes the other feel whole. All of these small pieces integrated within Robbie's story made this book so very powerful for me. But nothing, and I mean nothing, held my heart like the love of a father for his son, and the indomitable will of that very small baby.

Thank you, J.P., for this beautiful story that I love and cherish. Thank you.

NOTE: This book was provided by Dreamspinner Press for the purpose of a review on Rainbow Book Reviews.

A Girl Has No Name says

After reading mostly dark and/or mystery books these last days, I was really looking forward to this book, which is - considering the main topic - not that frequent in this genre. And I really wanted to love this book, but somehow it didn't work out that well. Don't get me wrong, *A Heart for Robbie* is a very interesting read, but it just didn't become one of my favorites.

Julian, is a **gay YA writer**, who is tired of feeling alone after being betrayed by his ex-boyfriend on so many levels. He wanted a husband, a house and child for such a long time, that he decides to take the matters into his own hand. His best friend Erin is willing to give birth to Julian's child and he is really looking forward to become a father. Unfortunately, his **son Robbie is born with heart abnormalities**.

The medical team is informing the devastated father about all the possibilities there are to save his son's life and Julian doesn't need long to decide. Julian is going through a difficult time, a time full of **desperation, fear and insecurities**.

I can see it in his eyes when he looks at me, and he can't breath, and he wants Daddy to make it better. And I can't.

Overburdened by the whole situation, Julian is trying to take all the right decisions. While having all the support he can get by Erin, her husband Paul and his parents, Julian is still feeling alone. Luckily, Simon - who is responsible for the insurance work in the team caring for Robbie - is charmed by Julian and wants to be at his side. Deeply in the closet, he first has to overcome his own demons, but he is sure that Julian is the right man for him. After offering to drive Julian home after a difficult situation in the hospital, the two men slowly start falling for each other. I liked their relationship building, but somehow it really **didn't feel credible** at all. I kept thinking that everything was happening too fast.

While keeping their relationship a secret due to Simon's involvement in Robbie's care taker team and due to the fact that Simon is really **deep in the closet**, he is still able to help Julian handle the situation with his son. He gives him **hope and strenght** and is falling in love with Robbie just like everybody else meeting the sweet little baby. And with Simon's help:

Robbie was fighting for his life, and his father would fight right along with him.

And I have to say that the last third of the book really got me hooked, unfortunately I can't say the same about the other two thirds.

I enjoyed reading about the writing process in which Julian develops the characters for his books and his discussions with his own book characters - Liam and Clay - were interesting to follow. It took me a while to get used to the idea, but after a few scenes I was waiting for them to show up. I also liked the way Julian's OCD tendencies were described and the way they became less frequent, when Julian started to find his inner

balance.

There were thus quite a few things I liked about this book and I can't even name the reasons this book turned out to be "only" a three star read for me. The pace wasn't for me and I had to struggle through so many chapters, that the great ending part isn't making up for it.

A Heart for Robbie is still a very **beautiful, intense and emotional** read.

Jewel says

?This book could have easily crossed the line into preachy. I am very glad it did not. Though a couple of the minor/supporting characters invoked god ad nauseam, the MC's didn't so much (thankfully). I don't like to be preached at in my pleasure reading, so I'm happy that the line wasn't crossed here.

?This book touched me on so many levels. It was heart breaking and hopeful. It was nerve wracking and beautiful. I loved getting to know Julian and his writing process. Liam and Clay were good company. I even loved his OCD tendencies, though they seemed to get less pronounced as the story unfolded. I loved watching Simon not only come to terms with being gay, but get strong enough to come out. And I loved Robbie, whose very presence one can not help but cherish. Together they learned what life and family is all about.

I knew going in that this book was going to be a bit intense. JP Barnaby writes some intense stories and doesn't seem to shy away from the hard stuff. Her writing is not in the least bit superficial, but full and vivid. No exception here. She is on my, very short, auto-buy list and I can't wait to see what she comes up with next.

Lisa The Novel Approach says

Anyone who knows the story behind the story of *A Heart for Robbie* knows this is a novel that's very close to JP Barnaby's own heart, and reading this novel with the bias of a parent is heart-wrenching. Reading this novel with the objectivity of a reviewer is uplifting. Reading this novel simply as a human being, parent or not, is an emotional paradox. It's an odd juxtaposition to look at a book from such divergent points of view, but it's one of the things that makes *A Heart for Robbie* a beautiful experience—as a parent, I empathized with Julian Holmes and the agony he experiences throughout the journey to save his son; as a human being I felt so much compassion for Julian's experience and the horrific possibility of losing a child, all the inadequacy and helplessness and anger and terror that goes along with it, especially the overwhelming guilt of knowing that another child must die in order for your child to live; as a reader I was elated the author was able to rewrite the ending she didn't get in life, and give her characters all the joy and happiness that can be found when miracles happen. But that's the true beauty of fiction, isn't it, the ability to give a happy ending to the realities that aren't always so benevolent or forgiving in real life?

The emotional contrast that works so well in *A Heart for Robbie* is the love story not only between a father and his son but also between Julian and Simon Phelps, the hospital's insurance coordinator and a man who, for reasons of professional ethics, should've been off limits. Though Simon never denies his sexuality to himself—he's fully accepted that he's a gay man—he very much hides it from his co-workers, friends,

family, and I have to confess that I worried a bit about how JP Barnaby would work that conflict into a story that was already so heavy with emotion, but the answer is that Julian and Simon falling in love was woven into the story perfectly, giving the plot the balance it needed between hope and heartache. When Simon finally meets Julian and the two men realize there's a spark there, the fact that Julian is able to find happiness during one of the most terrifying ordeals any parent can face was the perfect contrast to Simon's fear of coming out. When Simon is given the opportunity to put things into perspective, it was a moment that made me want to cheer for him.

A Heart for Robbie isn't what I'd call a light summer read, but it is a story where light is found in a dark time. There are so many things that make this book highly recommendable: JP Barnaby makes certain that all the while she's breaking your heart just a little, she's also working hard to stitch it back together again, which is very much what she does for Julian. There is no angst for the sake of angst, but there is love for the sake of love, hope for the sake of hope, and happiness for the sake of a parent's love for his child. There are tears and there are smiles, there are smiles through tears—Julian's, Simon's, and yes, maybe I shed a few myself, but there's no better way to get to a happily ever after, as far as I'm concerned, than to feel my way to it one word at a time, and that's what this book does.

Helena Stone says

I received my copy from the author.

Some books touch me so deeply I find it almost impossible to write a review. 'A Heart for Robbie' is such a book. No matter how hard I think about it, no matter how often I start this review I can't seem to find the words to convey exactly what this book did to me. I don't seem to have the language to explain everything I thought and felt while reading this story. I'll try though because I do want to share my love for this book and admiration for the author with as wide an audience as possible.

'A Heart for Robbie' is a book with several layers all of which are fully developed and brought to a plausible and satisfactory conclusion. First and foremost this is little Robbie's story. We watch his father, Julian, as he tries to come to grips with the unimaginable; his much wanted baby boy, born with a heart defect. Because there is no way to understand or accept that the child you love so dearly and wanted so badly may not live to see his first birthday. You don't come to terms with that. All you can do is deal as best you can; bestow all your love on the child while you hope for a miracle. And that's where it all gets extra poignant because the miracle you are waiting for means another child has to die. You feel your own heart breaking as your child gets sicker and know exactly how devastated a parent is when they are faced with the loss of a child and yet, that is what you have to pin your hopes on.

Julian's emotions are described with such clarity the reader can almost feel them – I say almost because I don't think anyone can really imagine what it is like to (almost) lose a child unless they've actually been through that experience. And yet this book isn't all doom and gloom. Julian lives as normal a life as he can with Robbie. He goes through all the worries and anxieties all new parents face, except that his are amplified because of Robbie's condition. The fact that the reader does recognise so many of those first-time parent moments, means that it is easier to identify with Julian while it also allows the reader to take a quick breather occasionally.

I loved Simon's part of the story. The poor man is so afraid of losing his parents and ending up all alone that he'd rather live a lie. And yet, the moment his secrecy might make Robbie's situation even more precarious than it already is, he puts his own concerns behind him and steps up to the plate. In fact all of Julian and Simon's love story was a joy to read. It was a great way of showing that even during the most tragic of times life does go on. That wonderful things can and do happen even in the midst of nightmares. The relationship gave Julian the strength to keep on putting one foot in front of the other and the reader the opportunity to keep on reading without drowning in a black hole of sadness.

This book could easily have been an unrelenting tear-jerker. The fact that it isn't is testament to the wonderful craftsmanship of J.P. Barnaby. She introduced exactly the right amount of lighter touches to keep this very poignant story both realistic and bearable. I loved the way Julian could see the characters from his book and have conversations with them, even if it did also show exactly how lonely the man was. I adored the fact that Liam, the main character from Julian's young adult books wore a Sinner's Gin T-shirt; a nice wink in the direction of Rhys Ford.

Of course the real heartbreak comes when you realise that this story is based on, and dedicated, to Kaitlyn, the baby daughter J.P. Barnaby lost almost two decades ago. I'll never know where she found the strength and courage to write this story. I do know the world is a better place because she did. This reader is grateful and feels privileged to have been allowed to read this powerful, beautiful, and life-affirming story.

On a different note, if J.P. Barnaby ever feels inclined to write those Black Heart stories I for one would be delighted to read them.

Brandon Witt says

A Heart for Robbie, I believe, is J.p. Barnaby's finest work. For those of you who are fans of her writing, you know that is no small compliment. For those of you who are too scared to read her books, knock it off and toughen up a bit—you're missing a master storyteller. Sure, she can make you cry and wince. That's the sign of some good writing. She makes you feel! Unlike, yours truly, I've yet to read a Barnaby that didn't leave my spirit soaring by the end. (Okay, I'll quit bossing now.)

I will be honest, I was nervous about this book. I guess I didn't have faith. And, for that, I apologize. I couldn't see how Barnaby could take such a personal, possibly heart-wrenching tale, and make it a romance. She did. I'm still not really sure how she pulled it off, but she did. Beautifully.

The most important part of this book, Robbie (and the implied waiting for death of another child to save Robbie), I am not a good enough writer to even capture what a truly spectacular job Barnaby did around every nuance of him and this topic. Wherever there was a sweet note needed, she played it. Wherever there was anxiety or fear required, she weaved it in seamlessly. Wherever there was the need for a small escape into fantasy, she allowed it to flow followed by enough real-life sincerity to give it depth and credence. It was a symphony.

This is more than excellent writing (and it is). It is story of immeasurable importance, a story of light and hope in a world of darkness and pain, a story of love for those who gave up their life so that others might live. It is a story that will stay with you forever.

Kazza says

I think this book is very well meaning, and written with much insight on the subject of a sick child with heart defects and the impact it has on loved ones (so, no rating). Nevertheless, it is a review copy, so this is my review.

I did struggle with A Heart For Robbie because of (but not limited to) the following reasons.

I found the book to move very slowly for a while. It got a bit repetitive.

I get sick of the whole homophobic mother device - they do things like trying to set their closeted son up with a female. They also look down their nose at fat people, think their son needs a woman, think that girls should be married so a man can look after them - anything that ramps up their silly, mean-spirited (*boo hiss*) nature. (In all fairness, I must add that Julian's family and friends were supportive.)

I'm also not keen on (thirty+) adult-children who can't speak up when said parent(s) voice their nasty, controlling opinions.

Then there's the homophobes who equate gay men with paedophiles, yes, I know they definitely exist, but **on top of** a sick baby, a closeted MC, and match-making medalling mum(s) it is too much for me. Then there is the fact that the MC's both want a family and all things relationship, which the reader is reminded of quite a bit.

And it bugged me that a woman who made a comment that a man with his baby is *giving his wife a break* didn't necessarily mean she is against a gay father, she just didn't think about it before speaking - people do it all the time without actual malice. That Julian took offense and took off without listening didn't sit well with me - wait to hear what people say. The last part is more to do with the way the book was written than that small, isolated event.

I believe many will enjoy this book. I just could not get into it, which is a shame, the premise is a good one, I do enjoy J.P Barnaby, but you can't love them all.

This book was supplied to me by the publisher in return for an honest review.

Tracy~Bayou Book Junkie says

4.5 Stars

I'm not quite sure how I missed this story by JP Barnaby, but I sure am glad I found it! This was a sweet and lovely read. Sad, but also filled with hope and so much love. I absolutely adored Julian and Simon and I loved watching them with little Robbie.

Robbie's illness brings up a lot of memories, although my daughter didn't need a heart transplant, she did have open heart surgery at 9 months old and I remember the fear and uncertainty of not knowing if she would make it to, and later through, surgery. Asking the doctors for reassurances and hitting a brick wall and I definitely remember the screeching of that damned apnea monitor, and while it was annoying, it was also a security letting you know your baby was still alive. I thought the author's handling of Robbie's illness was

authentic and well done.

This was an enjoyable read, well-written and filled with emotion. Simon and Julian were wonderful guys and I loved that they found one another. They had amazing chemistry and I loved that Simon was there to support Julian, as well as Robbie.

Another thing that was unique about this story was the presence of Liam and Clay, two characters from Julian's books, I loved watching them interact with Julian and the author made me want to read their series and get to know them better.

This was an enjoyable story that I'd can definitely recommend!

copy kindly provided by Dreamspinner Press for my reading enjoyment

Barb ~rede-2-read~ says

I just finished this and it's hard to verbalize my thoughts into a coherent review. This was truly a love story, but not necessarily a love story like I've come to expect from the M/M genre. It was so much more. It was the story of the love of one man for his child, his family, his friends, and eventually for another man as well. But aside from all of those facets of love, there's no mistaking the fact that this story is principally about a father's love more than anything else.

Julian Holmes is a highly successful author whose best friend Erin, as his surrogate, has just delivered his son as the story opens. But the baby has a defective heart, so much so that he needs to have immediate surgery and he must go onto the cardiac transplant list if he qualifies. It's touch and go for a while and Julian soaks up everything he needs to know to be able to care for his special needs baby but even with the support of his parents and best friends, at the end of the day he's alone. And though he notices that lack in his life, he's not prepared to focus on anything but baby Robbie.

But then a chance meeting with the insurance coordinator from the hospital, Simon Phelps, leads to more than a quick drink and a ride home and Julian finds himself falling for the handsome, quiet man who's deeply in the closet. Simon has not come out to family or friends, fearing that he'll lose them and he'll be completely alone in the world. And he certainly can't come out now that he's started a relationship with Julian because it's against hospital ethics for him to be involved with someone who's on the transplant list.

Nevertheless, the men fall more deeply in love, and when Robbie is facing a life or death crisis, Simon is accidentally outted and their relationship becomes known. The steps both men then take in their relationship are not disappointing and I appreciate that the author didn't create a misunderstanding or major crisis between them to lengthen the story. They acted true to character and provided for a more poignant and emotionally moving drama.

This story is so very much worth reading for any fans of M/M romance, but especially for those who appreciate hurt/comfort stories and for those who want something that is about the love between two men and the day to day life activities of being in love, rather than a quick hot sex scene. And the book is for those who appreciate a story involving family and all that stands for. Make sure you have your tissues ready before you start to read. You're going to find it hard to put this one down before you're done.

Eli Easton says

This is an amazing story that I recommend to anyone. It has a m/m romance plot that I really enjoyed. It did not feel like a side story which I thought it might. It was a real romance and I loved the fact that Simon was able to be there for Julian and Robbie at a time when they really needed it, and that they gave Simon the courage to finally accept himself and stand up to his parents about who he was.

But of course the core of this story is Robbie. Julian's best friend was a surrogate for Robbie, and Julian wanted a child more than anything. From the moment Robbie is born and rushed away by the doctors, through the end of the book, we really feel Julian's sense of helplessness, despair, hope, and intense parental love. Knowing this was based on a true story made everything incredibly real and authentic.

The thing I loved about JP's "Aaron" is, as angsty as that book was, it had consistent moments of brilliant and hope that lifted the story and made it a rollercoaster rather than a downward spiral. It never felt like the author was just beating the characters over the head with drama for the sake of it. I'm not a big angst fan, but I loved that book and I love "A Heart for Robbie". Though it is a story that has an intense struggle for the life of a little boy, it is never without hope. The love throughout is amazing, touching, and real. The positive moments and scenes uplift the book and make it a compelling (though heart-wrenching) read.

I read this book without putting it down except when I absolutely had to. Highly recommended for anyone, not just m/m readers.

Love Bytes Reviews says

5 STARS

Reviewed by Dani

Incredible, sincere, real, heart breaking, heart-wrenching, sad, uplifting, hope, character, strength, love, support, drama, relationships, friendship, hurt, courage, emotions...

There are just a few of the words that come to mind after reading this powerful book.

In a way I feel honored that I had the opportunity to read this story. It's so emotional...so complete and so much more than just a novel.

Reading the blurb I cannot deny I was a little scared of what this story would put me through as a reader. I mean, the high level of emotions are already there in that short premise.

And the emotions I got were all over the room. This book had me shivering in fear, clutching my own hand in hope, bawling like a child in despair and shining in love.

We meet Julian as he is about to become a daddy through surrogacy with his best friend Erin, who gives him the gift of Robbie. But Robbie is not well. He has a major heart condition and the long struggle begins for Robbie, Julian and their family and friends.

During this he meets Simon who works at the hospital and where they meet again when Simon steps up for Julian when the father is at his lowest in worrying about Robbie. Things get out of control and they both give in to their urge to be together. Out of this tragedy with Robbie there grows something incredibly beautiful between both men, found in loneliness and bringing them together.

To find out what this story brings you on Robbie's story as well as Julian and Simon's I would like to encourage you to read this yourself. I can state facts here but I rather choose to go with the emotions and the feeling it gave me as I mentioned in the beginning of this review.

For me this story is a must read. Where I can appreciate the different levels of writing by Miss Barnaby (who is known for the award winning books Aaron and Spencer as well as the Rentboy series to name just a few of her works) this book is on a level of its own. Author J.P Barnaby made something so personal and private into a complete story that will break your heart and built it up from scratch again.

Thank you for sharing this with us although I feel a mere thank you is too little to express

Danielle

Please visit www.lovebytesreviews.com to see this and many more reviews, interviews guest posts and giveaways!

Sheri says

I am nervous. There. I said it. Actually, I was nervous the entire book.

Nervous and scared, excited and fired up, flustered and eager...

and so damn hopeful.

My heart is heavy and raw. My eyes are dry, but only because I finished the final page days ago. Frankly, I'm exhausted, emotionally beat down.

And I think you should join me. Ha! Seriously, misery loves company, right?

Wait! Don't go.

Let me tell you why I'm suggesting that you sign yourself up for this story with an extra-large box of Kleenex.

This book isn't perfect. But our lives are filled with wonderful less-than-perfect gifts.

This book isn't easy. But some of the greatest books demand a fight uphill to get...there.

This book isn't all gloom & doom. Even in the face of despair, smiles shine and love blooms.

It is about baby Robbie, it is about family, and it is about hope.

I told you my heart was heavy, yes? Well, because it is loaded with hope.

The blurb is very well written, it effectively sums up the storyline. However, it is so much more than a father's fight for his son's survival. Multiple facets kept it going. You are guaranteed to stir up lots of feelz, for it was overflowing with them.

Being a mother myself, I could close my eyes and imagine switching places with Julian. I felt his pain, his desperation, and his fear. I believe the emotions are displayed with such clarity even if you are not part of the mom and dad club, it won't make much difference. That alone is one of the many reasons I think you should experience this powerful journey.

Julian is a strong, successful man. A seasoned author with a head full of talking voices. We all know money does not buy happiness and Julian has been burned by false promises before. He confronts his loneliness head-on and accepts that his happily-ever-after isn't going to appear gift-wrapped on his doorstep. If he wants it, he must go get it.

Someone to love and someone to reciprocate....that's what he wants, what he needs. His family supports his decision to become a father and his best friend surrogates a child to fill the void in his life.

Little did he know when a child is born, so is a parent. Parents lose the safekeeping of their own heart, no longer is it protected and secure...but if you ask any parent, it's a risk worth taking.

Robbie is born and in an instant his elation turns to desolation.

No heart lacks the strength to break another.

This precious blessing holds immense powers and can forever change his future.

Julian, Robbie and Simon...I simply loved every one.

Strong characters tied together with deep emotions negate any complaints I might have had. I could have done without the prologue and I was less than thrilled with Simon's mother. My emotions were strung so tight, I didn't need the added layer of disgust with the homophobic mom. I understand she had an important role in the capsizing of Simon's life, but that doesn't mean I had to like it (or her for that matter). Some things weren't exactly necessary, so I merely grazed over those moments and focused on the essentials. The tender bonding and the fierce need between Julian and Simon balanced the hardships.

Impressive, intense and the epilogue made every tear shed....worth it.

4 huge-healing-heartastic stars*

Sandra says

I knew going in, given the blurb and cover image, that this would be a tearjerker.

And it was.

But it was also a story of hope, love, and family, and fighting for your child's life with everything you have and everything you can, even if it means stepping on people's toes and pushing your way through whatever red tape the insurance companies will throw at you.

When Julian Holmes' son Robbie is born, via surrogate, with a heart defect that would require surgery and a donor heart to save his life, Julian begins the fight of his life - to save his child.

While still in the hospital, he meets Simon Phelps, who is the insurance coordinator. Simon is gay and still very much in the closet, but falls hard and fast for the reclusive author.

With finesse and heart, J.P. Barnaby delivers a story that is at once heart-warming and heartbreaking. With fully fleshed out characters, and a well-rounded supporting cast, *A Heart For Robbie* tells not only the story

of a father fighting for his son to live, but also gives us a sweet love story between two men who are both very lonely, but unsure how to find what they are looking for.

Though the romance itself takes a backseat - it develops, it is, it causes some issues, but it's never at the forefront of the book. Reading this book as a parent myself was difficult - to imagine the fear, confusion and pain of being told that your newborn child might not live for but a few months, that your little innocent baby needs a donor heart to even make it to his first birthday, that you might not even get to take him home.

Julian was very realistically portrayed, and if you know J.P. well enough, you would know that his character's experiences, feelings and thoughts are likely modeled very closely to her own story. That in itself, knowing this while reading, was enough to make me cry. There is so much sorrow between the lines, so much pain and grief, that it was at times a heart-wrenching read.

Simon was also well done, fearing the reaction of his family and friends if he were to come out, fearful of it being held against him at work, and scared to live outside of the closet. The burden of keeping your sexuality a secret has to be crushing, and I'm glad that Simon found his way into being himself, being who he is.

Considering the not so small issue with the professional ethics of having a relationship with the father of a patient, which caused a big issue toward the end, I was rather surprised that Simon decided to pursue Julian despite his misgivings. It smacked slightly of instalove, but I'm a romantic at heart and believed that sometimes, you find exactly who you were looking for, even if the circumstances aren't the best. And that kind of love doesn't come along all that often, so you should grab it when you find it, and fight to keep it.

The writing flows well, is detailed but not overly so, and the words painted a realistic and believable picture of a terrible and terrifying situation. I was glad that Julian at least had supportive parents and friends, and I even forgave him for being not so nice to his friend, who was also the surrogate. She had a horrible experience just the same, but I understood that Julian's focus was on Robbie, so much so that conventional niceties were no longer important.

I also enjoyed the similarities between the two characters - one out and proud, but terrified and stricken by fear and grief, the other in the closet, terrified of being found out. Their love story also provided a much needed reprieve from the ordeal Julian and his son are going through, and it was woven nearly perfectly into the main storyline.

It's not an easy book to read, and I wouldn't recommend it as a fun summer beach read, but it's a book well worth your time. For every sad moment the author breaks your heart, she's also giving you another happy moment to make you smile, and never loses the focus of her tale - that of hope, love and a parent's fight for his child.

I very much appreciated the epilogue, and closed the file on my Nook with a smile.

And yet, I cried because I wish that the author herself had gotten that sort of happy ending too.

Thankfully and luckily, in this book, Julian has the means to pay for the medical expenses - so many others don't.

** I received a free copy of this book from the author. A positive review was not promised in return. **

Amy says

This was a very difficult book to read. Especially if you are a parent. Even more so if you are a parent whose newborn had to spend time in the hospital. My experience wasn't anywhere near as traumatic as a heart transplant, but this story brought back a lot of memories nonetheless. I enjoyed Julian and Simon. There was a little bit of insta-love going on, but I can see how their backgrounds lead them to move so quickly. A very good (and very emotional) book.

Tamika♥RBF MOOD♥ says

4 stars.
