



The Best Laid Plans

Lauren Gallagher

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After years of trying to complete their family, Gabe and Shahid are at the end of their tether. When yet another adoption falls through, Gabe is ready to give up. Shahid isn't far behind him. Apparently being a gay couple—half of which is Muslim—is just one strike too many.

Then their friend Kendra suggests carrying their baby for them. None of them like the odds or invasiveness of IVF, but there is one other method they could use. Though Shahid is gay, Gabe is bi, and they both quickly warm up to the idea. Especially when they realize just how much chemistry they have with her.

It's a simple plan—Kendra will have the baby, they'll all share parenting responsibilities, and the means of conception will be a hell of a lot more fun than adoption paperwork or medical procedures.

As things heat up between Kendra and Gabe, though, Shahid's long-buried insecurities about being with a bisexual man bubble to the surface. When some medical news stops everything in its tracks, they realize just how many emotions are involved. And no matter how they play this, one person might be left out in the cold.

This 80,000 word novel was previously published.

The Best Laid Plans Details

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From Reader Review The Best Laid Plans for online ebook

C.B. Lee says

A well crafted poly love story with heat and will tug at your heartstrings. When traditional adoption channels fail Gabe and Shahid and their friend Kendra offers to carry a baby for them, a new relationship develops. The point of view switch between the three protagonists really worked for the story and bringing all three together. Excellent portrayal of open and honest communication with and dealt with the conflicts of external homophobia, the personal struggle with fertility and the three of them working it out together and all falling in love.

Kirsty says

I'm a big fan of the romance book website Smart Bitches Trashy Books, even though I don't read romance books. I'd read a couple of Mills & Boon novels (the UK equivalent of Harlequin in the US) and hated them – so twee, so cutesy, so traditional, so non-feminist. It really put me off, but Smart Bitches made me see that romance is more than Mills & Boon.

With 2016 I decided to try out a new genre, and dip my toe into the potentially strange and chilly world of romance. I'm so glad I started with this book, as I loved it. It's romantic and hot (which is what you want in a romance, really), as well as considering serious issues in a thoughtful way (Islamophobia, non-traditional relationships), and presenting sexuality as a spectrum rather than a strict binary. All things considered, I loved it, and I'm looking forward to adding more romance to my reading.

Guilty Pleasures Book Reviews says

Kitty's review posted at Guilty Pleasures Book Reviews

I knew that The Best Laid Plans had the making of an emotional read. Though I didn't cry my eyespurestdelightaward out, I did become a bit depressed and hoped that everything worked out and dreams and wishes came true for Gabe and Shahid. Kendra was the wild-card and, even though my heart broke for her, I admired and truly fell in love with her heart of gold.

It's hard to really summarize this story without giving away everything. I hate spoilers and I hate not being able to really get to the meat of this story; to tell you why I became depressed. What I can tell you is that I had a very hard time putting the book down. The love Gabe and Shahid had was true and real. They were truly invested in each other and in having a baby but they were denied time and time again. Not because they were a gay, married couple but because Shahid was a practicing Muslim. What they went through, the things that were said about them, had my head spinning. Gabe's family totally disgusted me with their opinions and remarks. Don't get me wrong, I am totally aware of how prejudice people could be but it broke me when people's prejudices would take away a dream and break the hope of two wonderful, loving people.

Kendra was a whole other story. She had a heart of gold and knew that her gift to the two of them would be life changing for all of them. She knew, deep down, that she was doing the right thing but had serious doubts how she was going to keep her heart intact. She knew Gabe was bi-sexual but hasn't been with a woman

since he met Shahid. She knew Gabe sleeping with a woman and wanting her more, was Shahid's biggest fear. But, she would do just about anything for her best friend and would deal with the fallout the best that she could. She only hoped that she wouldn't lose the two people who have become her family. What she didn't expect was to fall in love with both of them.

A lot happened between Kendra, Gabe and Shahid. A lot of emotions were felt and acted upon. But, when the unexpected happened, instead of bringing them closer together, it tore them all apart. Now, it's time to face feelings that weren't expected and really face the truth.

God, I fell in love with all three of these characters. Lauren Gallagher wrote a beautiful, heart-warming story that was filled with love and devotion and she gave us the true meanings of sacrifice, hope and happily-ever-afters. She gave us three amazing characters that had their own lives and beliefs and meshed them together seamlessly. Then she showed us just how easy it is, with the right people surrounding you, to overcome the mean, hateful people of this world and live your life to the fullest.

Review copy provided for an honest review.

Veronica of V's Reads says

This is a contemporary MMF menage romance between a married gay couple and a woman who volunteers to be a surrogate. Expect MM, MF, MMF and MFM pairings.

Gabe and Shahid have been together since college. Eleven years of monogamy, married, with a home they'd love to fill with children. They've been trying to adopt for years, but the process has been stymied three times when mothers back out on account of Shahid being an observant Muslim. Gabe is completely in love with his husband, even though their clash of religion makes life uncomfortable with his devoutly Roman Catholic family. Their rather callous insensitivity to Muslim customs and law is a constant aggravation, and Shahid's grueling work schedule as an ER nurse precludes more than one or two visits annually, and never during Christian holidays. (Because Shahid is a boss and takes double shifts so his Christian co-workers can spend Christmas and Easter with their families...). Plus, Gabe's bisexual, and wouldn't life be easier with a woman. Or, not a Muslim... (These aren't words that they speak, but the intent has been there all along, and don't think Shahid isn't sensitive to this. Because, trust me...he is.)

When this latest adoption falls through, Gabe's work colleague (they are both high school science teachers and cross-country coaches) Kendra begins to consider offering herself for surrogacy. She's been divorced from her cheating husband for three years and can't seem to find a good man to date. Gabe and Shahid were her rocks through the divorce and its aftermath. They are all good friends, often spending movie nights and meals together. Kendra and Gabe have a solid friendship, and while Kendra's not convinced she wants the own children yet, it pains her to see both Gabe and Shahid suffer without. After some soul searching she makes the offer.

Gabe and Shahid are gobsmacked, wary and curious. Neither man really wants to go through IVF--for religious and medical reasons--and Kendra's a dear friend, willing to undertake Operation Pregnancy in the old-fashioned way: knocking boots... Shahid's old jealousies regarding Gabe's bisexuality are dusted off and presented afresh. Would Gabe leave him for Kendra? Again, and again, Shahid's feared Gabe walking away, simply because of the complexities of their religious and familial detente. They all agree to think it over. A lot.

Shahid prays over it, and considers it. Kendra's offer may be their one and only shot at parenthood. He agrees to see if Gabe and Kendra are compatible. Boy are they. And while it's awkward and weird and fraught with complexity, Gabe having a taste of Kendra ramps his desire for Shahid up x 1000. (Not that they EVER had an issue with intimacy before.) The aftermath, however, results in Gabe offering to have Shahid present at their next tryst--so he can be a part of the process, and not feel excluded. And Kendra's down for it. She's always found both Shahid and Gabe attractive, and she so wants to help them--and not make it weird. The results are sexy-sexy. Shahid's stunned at how aroused he is with Kendra in the middle. His fears of being excluded are invalidated; though he's not particularly attracted to Kendra, the experience is mighty arousing. Shahid's a confirmed gay man, though. That remains the same... well, mostly the same.

Fast forward, and there's going to be heartache. I was just as nervous that Shahid's fears for Gabe and Kendra would be realized, and they are to a degree. This is a complicated relationship. Three dear friends, two committed spouses and a third, finding a love within each other. One that satisfies a need for family that Gabe and Shahid had been experiencing. I really loved how the intricacies of this all got discussed, rationally, and in detail. I loved Kendra, for her heart, and her selflessness. I didn't want her to be alone when all was said and done.

What was really intriguing was the issue of faith. Shahid's faith is strong. He's observant in his religion, more so than Gabe and far more than Kendra. He's in constant reflection of his actions, and decisions and if Allah would approve. For him, all things come from Allah, and that included Gabe, who initially approached Shahid under the guise of better understanding Islam in their comparative religions class. Though we do not have any contact with Shahid's family, his reflections tell the reader that they are kind, compassionate people who are also faithful and believe that their son is who Allah intended him to be. I'm not sure if this is "pie in the sky" hopefulness, but the representation of a well-adjusted Muslim-American family (Shahid emigrated with his family from Pakistan when he was four) with a beloved gay son was powerful for me, from a diversity standpoint.

I also loved that the HEA actually hinged on what had been a source of conflict at the beginning: Shahid's religion. I don't believe it was convenient, either, because these characters all had a whole lot of suffering to get through before they got there. It's an emotional read, with a lot of sexy moments, too. I don't think the author left an unanswered questions for the reader, which was nice. This kind of story, an evolution of the standard relationship, is often tricky to balance. The characters are all good, kind, decent people who make good, kind, decent decisions 99% of the time. I have a hard time believing readers will not love all of them.

I received a review copy of this book via NetGalley.

Kristie says

The things I loved:

- An already committed married couple
- An amazing and strong best female friend
- Honest conversations not only between the married couple, but all three of them
- Understanding and openness
- Real family issues I could relate to in some way or another
- Extreme chemistry between all parties involved
- Openness to exploration

Not sticking to labels and redefining themselves as they fit together

I could go on for a very long time, I think. This book explores a very loving couple, Shahid and Gabe, looking to adopt, and getting turned down over and over. They're getting to the end of their patience and are really getting discouraged. The problem? It's not, supposedly, that they're a gay couple. Nope. It's religion. Shahid is Muslim, and that's what they're being told is the issue. Sadly, I'm willing to bet this is something that has happened to couples before.

When Shahid and Gabe think there might not be anything left for them to do, their very good friend Kendra, she offers to step in and be a surrogate. Awesome, right? It really is. She's not only willing to do this because they're great friends, but because she's an amazing person. She knows that her friends would make amazing parents, and she's willing to do whatever they need to help them out.

Attraction helps them in the efforts to conceive, but conceiving actually seems to be a problem. What isn't the problem is how their friendship and attraction turns into something more. This is where open communication and the honesty they share with each other works so well in the story. Sure, there is conflict and insecurities, but what they have, the friendship and relationship that was already so solid, is something none of them are willing to give up.

This story is a bit long, but the author is careful to not gloss over things. Everything that happens is necessary and it feels really good in the end. A book about mature adults, all working together to um, work together. I really appreciated that, quite a lot.

Recommended.

Thank you to NetGalley for an ARC in exchange for my honest review.

Nina ~ Meleth Bookaddicted ~ says

This book defies quite a few clichés. First is the impression of it being an MMF ménage, where usually you have three people each falling for the other two (which is also the reason why I usually prefer MMF over MFM). Well, if you read the blurb, you'll realize that this might not be the case with this one – which was as much of a breath of fresh air as it was making me skeptical. Also, which absolutely surprised me and had me falling for the story, there is the fact that while this book might be spiked with lots of hot and carnal sex as to be expected with a ménage, it has so much substance, so much depth about real life problems (which in all honesty shouldn't be a problem at all nowadays, though much of the society thinks otherwise), that it becomes an emotional rollercoaster.

A happily married gay couple who yearns to have their own children and a good female friend who wants to put an end to all the denials they already had to endure over the years whenever they tried to adopt – denial not even over the most obvious reason, no, but because of their mixed-religion marriage. Kendra's offer is huge: to be the surrogate mother for their kid – only she wants to receive the old-fashioned way with the bisexual Gabe. Trouble is inevitable, seeing that Shahid, who is gay, will be somewhat left out in the whole process...

Before you ask: No, this story is not at all about cheating! These three are actually quite mature people to talk things out, communicate instead of always jump to conclusions on their own – well, at least most of the

time. Of course they have obstacles to overcome, fears to fight, and they learn things about one another and themselves they never thought were possible.

The narration. Lia Langola. To be frank, she is what drew me to this story by Lauren Gallagher, who was new to me, in the first place. I just love her beautiful sultry voice and the way she breathes lives into the characters. She is about the only female narrator who can do male voices I actually feel attracted to – which is saying something! Michael Ferraiuolo was new to me, but I liked his deeper, smooth voice instantly. He had to do the narrative from both male perspectives, which he did wonderfully overall, but there were times it was hard to tell which voice we were actually listening to.

All in all, I loved listening to this story that blindsided me a time or two and thoroughly recommend it.

Lindsay says

A gay couple begin a relationship with a friend who agrees to be their surrogate.

Kendra went through a nasty divorce from a cheating husband three years ago and it was her best friend Gabe and his husband Shahid who got her through it. Now, Gabe and Shahid face the collapse of yet another adoption of a desperately wanted child, not because they're a gay couple but because Shahid is a muslim. Kendra is heartbroken for them and comes up with an option to carry a baby for her friends.

As Gabe is bisexual, they opt to use "the old-fashioned way" to get Kendra pregnant, and they do that, but fairly quickly they begin to involve Shahid in their bedroom activities and the three become close. And then things hit a snag.

I actually read a fair bit of romance, but quality in this genre can be hard to find and a lot of the standard tropes I find either insulting or repellent. That's really not the case here. Yes, each of the characters are maybe a little bit more perfect than real humans, but they're not without their flaws. Kendra is insecure and Shahid is more than a little bit biphobic with Gabe, who he thinks would find it much easier to be in a relationship with a woman and someone who isn't a muslim.

Where I found this particularly satisfying is that we get this relationship in the context of work, families and religion and it all feels well thought out. The gay man doesn't magically become bisexual, and some thought goes into how this relationship can work. And the snag when it comes up doesn't feel contrived at all; it's something that happens in real life with depressing regularity and how it affects these characters is really interesting.

Strongly recommended for anyone who doesn't normally read romance and can handle some fairly steamy scenes.

? BookAddict ✎ La Crimson Femme says

A Catholic, a Muslim and an agnostic walk into an adoption agency...This will teach me to request a book without reading the blurb. Ms. Gallagher is one of those authors that makes me lose my mind. I see her name and all I can think of is "gimme gimme gimme" with my hands trying hard to grab a virtual book. I do not

even know why I am this way when her books inevitably pisses me off and moves me at the same time. Seriously, her writing is a hate-love situation. In this complicated ménage, Gabe and Shahid have been trying for nine years to adopt a child. Now that LGBT is more "open", adopting for a gay couple is not as difficult as it was previously. So what does Ms. Gallagher do? She throws in an unexpected element - Shahid is a practicing Muslim. What American woman giving her baby up for adoption would want a Muslim to be the father of her child? Especially if the child is a daughter? Because we have all heard the horror stories of how Muslims treat females.

This story is interesting as Ms. Gallagher likes to provoke her readers with uncomfortable ideas. Since gay men are no longer shocking and neither is a threesome, let's add religion to the mix. She's already written one with politics in it. I admire Ms. Gallagher's gumption to push the envelope and unravel the misconceptions people have about different cultures and religions. This is what I love about her. What I hate about her is that in order to do so, she consistently needs to vilify another culture or religion. Her portray of a specific Muslim man is good because it humanizes him and shows us the hardships he suffers. I wasn't sure if I would like Shahid when he first came onto the scene. I ended up really liking him. He became relatable as the reader learns more about him. He is a nurse in an ER. His passion is to help people. Sure he may have some personal issues that make his marriage a bit rocky at times, but who doesn't? This makes him more appealing. The disappointing part is Ms. Gallagher's extreme portrayal of the Catholics in this story. Talk about being a hypocrite. Seriously, Kendra's family all have so many children? Seriously, Gabe's family makes these terrible assumptions and accusations about Shahid and it's all tied to them being Catholic. I am not even Catholic and I'm appalled. It can't just be that Gabe's family are ignorant and jerks; it is because they are Catholic ignorant jerks. Then the tongue in cheek "Gabe's family is trying to be understanding" justification is even more of joke.

This irritating style of Ms. Gallagher's aside, the main characters are fabulous. Gabe is a wonderful partner and best friend. The situation between the three - Kendra, Shahid and Gabe is difficult. The realities of it are so well depicted. Surrogacy through a natural conception method does promote a certain intimacy. The exploration of the three with their relationship and how they deal with circumstances outside of their control is beautiful. First I felt excitement. Then a unexpected devastating blow hits the threesome, I felt badly for them. The way the strained relationship is presented and then resolved is amazing.

Another thing amazing is the sex. Oh boy does Ms. Gallagher write smoking hawt sex, even if one of the men is pretty much gay only. Shahid may not be able to become aroused sticking his dick into a pussy, but he can definitely be physically intimate with Kendra in a mind blowing hot way. The sex scenes in this story are intense and just the right amount. Each scene enhances the plot of the story in a meaningful manner. It doesn't not mean that all sex has to hold meaning between the three, but what I would like to point out, is the sex definitely created tighter bonds between the threesome. This is delicious to witness. Overall, this book is a great read. The plot is well developed. The characters are nicely fleshed out. The conflict is poignant and resolved in a win-win manner. Recommended to erotic romance readers who enjoy something a little different.

**provided by NetGalley*

Erica Chilson says

I received a copy of this title to read and review for Wicked Reads

4 Stars.

The Best Laid Plans wasn't a wise choice to decide to read at bedtime, thinking to read a few chapters. I finished the novel about 2 hours before my alarm was set to go off, so I ended up laying there mulling over what I had just read.

Gabe & Shahid have been trying to adopt a child for nearly 10 years, always being waylaid either because they are a gay couple or mixed-religion (Catholic & Muslim) It doesn't matter that they've been in a stable relationship, own their own home, with Gabe a high school science teacher and Shahid a ER nurse, something always stalls the adoption process.

Kendra is their best friend and Gabe's coworker. The guys have seen her through some tough times, when her husband cheated on her and they divorced. Wanting to do something selfless for her friends, Kendra decides to become a surrogate for Gabe and Shahid, the old-fashioned way.

In the quest to have a child, old relationship wounds are opened up. Mostly dealing with Shahid's insecurity over his husband being bisexual and the divide due to their religious beliefs. Even married, Gabe spends all the Christian holidays alone.

On the pages of the novel is some major angst, heartbreak, twisted emotions, a deeper look at religion, and realistic love and romance.

Instead of a wedge in their relationship, I felt that Kendra was written as empathetic and compassionate, not as if she was trying to hone in on her friends' relationship. Gabe was easy-going and wore his heart on his sleeve. Gabe had chemistry with both Shahid and Kendra, and believe it or not, it felt rushed and forced more so with his husband than with his coworker friend.

The main reason I couldn't give 5 stars was due to Shahid. His characterization and his inner monologue and behavior conflicted. The selfless nurse, selfless husband, yet his inner monologue was judgey and all about his needs and wants. Yes, this added the angsty edge to the story.

As an ER nurse, it was a generous gesture to work during Christian holidays so his co-workers could take those days off, but it also felt as a way for Shahid to hide away from Gabe's family. But, when it came time for Kendra to have a true medical emergency, Shahid made it all about him, all about his relationship with Gabe. That seemed contradictory. Shahid was only able to see it from his POV, in a very uncompassionate manner where 'what may have never been' faded. However, Kendra suffered a 'real' loss, not one of what may have been. In the following pages, where Kendra was left with no friends or shoulders to cry on, she was subjected to both Gabe and Shahid wanting to talk about their relationship instead of her MAJOR heartbreak. That should have been the straw that broke the camel's back, where a self-respecting Kendra told them to get lost and stop using her, playing on her emotions. I was frustrated and furious at how clueless the guys were during this portion. They didn't support Kendra- they abandoned her while fighting and making it about themselves.

I just couldn't connect with how cold and unaffected Shahid truly was- a user and manipulator. When it came to Gabe's family and the Christian holidays, Shahid wouldn't join Gabe, but then would complain how Gabe's family didn't want to know him, didn't understand him. The holidays aren't necessarily about religion- they are a way to connect as a family. Gabe's family didn't know Shahid because Gabe only saw them for major events, events in which Shahid ran off and made sure he was unavailable, leaving Gabe alone when he should have had his husband beside him. (I'm not excusing how Gabe's family spoke of Shahid, but they also

didn't know him. If you have a hard time dealing with those who are ignorant, educate them through familiarity, especially if they are actual family). Shahid only gave half of himself to Gabe, which is the only reason menage worked, because Gabe and Kendra gave all of themselves to each other and Shahid. You get married to have a partner, not where you pick and choose what aspects in life you want to be included/excluded from being involved with. In reverse, Gabe would have gone to Shahid's family for holidays.

Overall, I loved the book, but I was frustrated by Shahid, wanting to shake him and tell him to stop being so selfish by feigning selflessness. The ending was rushed after a slower paced novel that had scenes on repeat, but when true relationship development occurred, it flashed forward to an epilogue.

Heather in FL says

Lauren Gallagher is good with the feels. Not only does she write hot scenes, but there's always a great story underlying it all and this is no exception. It was really interesting to read about a gay, mixed religion couple and their best female friend. The mixed religions are Catholicism and Islam, which seems to be a really weird combo, but they made it work. Despite society. And their families. Honestly, Shahid's family was more welcoming than Gabe's family. The thinks Gabe's family would say to/about Shahid! It was also sad to hear how perfect strangers would treat Shahid at his job. I get that people have preconceived notions about Islam and terrorism, but not everybody wants to strap a bomb on in Allah's name. Dude's a nurse *helping you* and you're going to call him a terrorist and tell him to go back to his country? (Nevermind that he's been here since he was four.) Anyhoo... Shahid's religion is the reason all of their adoptions fall through. (Or at least that's what they think... something that happens at the end of the story makes me wonder.) And Kendra, their best friend, is more than willing to lend her uterus to them. But they don't want to do IVF (the odds of conception aren't that great and it's expensive), and Gabe is bisexual, so she suggests they do it the old fashioned way. When Shahid and Gabe first got together, Gabe's bisexuality was a real issue for Shahid... he was certain Gabe would decide Shahid couldn't provide what he needed and would leave. So Shahid giving his blessing for Gabe and Kendra to see if they can even make it work is huge, but Shahid thinks it's their only shot at getting a baby. Once it's clear Kendra and Gabe are compatible, Gabe suggests Shahid join in (as much as he's willing) so he feels more part of the process. Commence the threesomes! But not a threesome like I've ever read... because Shahid is gay. Like GAY gay, lol. But it's interesting to watch their dynamic. And what comes next is heartbreaking... and then uplifting again... ultimately a sweet happily ever after.

I have to say, I don't know much about Islam. I know they have their pilgrimage that means a lot to them. I know they pray several times a day, and I know they have dietary restrictions. But I learned a bit more in this book, and I have to say that if Islam would actually approach this situation in the way it was presented, Islam is a bit more open minded than I thought.

Nerdy Dirty & Flirty says

The Best Laid Plans was an extremely well written, exceptionally narrated story. The three main characters all had great personality and there was so much I liked about them in their own different ways. But their interactions and communication with each other was probably my favorite. I just love couples that actually

talk to each other. Who actually know each other. And who learn new things about themselves and each other as they grow together.

The two narrators for this story were fantastic. I've loved Lia Langola for a while now. It's gotten to the point where I will at least try just about any romance she narrates because I know I'm going to love listening to her. Michael Ferraiuolo isn't someone I have heard much by him, but I was very impressed with him in this one. He had two male voices to perform and I felt he did a great job giving them two distinct sounds.

This was a must listen to audiobook, and the story itself was so good I would definitely call it a must read as well.

Veronique says

I guess the usual stance is to see romance books as light and flighty. Well, on that basis, this one is going to surprise you. To name a few of the themes, we have homosexuality, bisexuality, marriage, religion (catholic and muslim), adoption, surrogacy, familial and unconventional relationships! And yet, Gallagher succeeds in juggling all of these while giving a believable and thoughtful portrayal of three very likeable characters. That's quite a feat in itself.

There is another big subject but that becomes visible later on and I applaud Gallagher for bringing it to the fore. (view spoiler)

A heart-warming love story that challenges us to see beyond labels on a variety of important issues.

Tifferz says

When I started reading this book I knew I needed to keep an open mind. I am all for everyone having the same rights and being able to express their faith, but growing up in a traditional home it can be hard to put those teachings aside. With that said I think Lauren did an amazing job incorporating the Muslim and Catholic faith in one couple. Add to that that they are a gay couple trying to adopt a baby makes for a interesting story.

I think that Shahid and Gabe were beautiful together who give hope to all couples going through hard times. They never fail each other and when they need space they make it work. I loved that we get to experience each individual in the triad. What was different from other menage books I have read is that this started out as a homosexual couple bringing in a female. One male was bi while the other had never been with a woman; yet each fall for her in their own way. Plus the real reason that they brought Kendra into the mix was because she wanted to be a surrogate for her best friends, Shahid and Gabe.

I really enjoyed the dynamics between the trio but felt that certain scenes were played out or were too long. Especially when they interacted with their family. I understand how the aspect of a big family can weigh on a couple especially when one side does not totally approve of the other. However, it seemed that these men and woman make all their decisions based on what or how their families think or feel. At the end though, it was nice to see them stick up for themselves and go after what they all wanted.

There was a few unexpected twists that had me grabbing a tissue; where others were predictable ones. Overall, a sweet read but for me it was not something that demanded my attention. If there is going to be another book I would definitely grab it because I would love to know what happens next.

I was gifted a copy from The Jeep Diva in exchange for an honest review. The ratings and review are my own and I was in no way compensated.

Sassafrass says

Lauren Gallagher is one of those authors that I don't hesitate to try. Her characters are never fail to be interesting and I love that her writing always makes me *feel* and always gets me thinking in ways I may not have before. **THE BEST LAID PLANS** was no different. It was the perfect blend of story, sizzle, and emotion.

This story has one of the most unique characters I've read about in a while: Shahid is a gay muslim man of Pakistani descent who is married to his husband Gabe. They have been trying to adopt a baby for years but they keep getting turned down. No, not because they are gay but because Shahid is muslim. They just got turned down again and things are looking bleak for them. That is until Gabe's best friend, Kendra, offers to be their surrogate and have a baby for them.

But, Shahid and Gabe don't want to put Kendra through a bunch of IVF with hormones and shots. Nope, they want to Kendra to conceive the old-fashioned way. And Gabe is the willing sperm donor. Did I mention that Gabe is bi?

So, the three of them hatch this plan to have a baby: Kendra and Gabe doing the deed until she gets pregnant. They've all talked about it and everyone's on board. Simple, huh? Yeah, right.

This was such an emotional read. It wasn't just what Gabe and Shahid had to go through being not only gay but interfaith as well. I loved how the author wrote about them that way that they handled their difference by finding common ground in their faiths. Then adding the dynamic of Kendra as well, it changed their relationship. And it was all sex and roses. There were real issues and that made the characters seem more real to me.

There were also a lot of steam here. Gabe, Kendra and Shahid sure did know how to be creative. And I thought that the way Shahid--who was not bisexual--dealt with bringing a woman into their bedroom was intriguing.

In the end, their relationship while not conventional worked for them and they were happy and it worked for them. And I guess that's all you can ask for of a HEA.

It wasn't what I envisioned when reading the blurb about this story. Without giving too much away, I was surprised about the relationship between Shahid and Kendra. It's not usually what you see in M/M/F menage. But, that's what makes this author's books so great in my opinion. She challenges you to go beyond what you think you know. These characters are going to stay with me for a while, and that's a sign of great writing in my opinion.

ARC received by NetGalley and Publisher in exchange for an honest review

Ruckasaurus Rex says

The Best Laid Plans by multi-genre author Lauren Gallagher (aka L.A. Witt/Lori Gallagher) is a contemporary romance with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersexual and asexual romance (LGBTQIA). The story focuses on a M/M couple – Shahid, a gay Muslim man, and Gabe who is a bisexual man that was raised Catholic. After years together the two have been trying to adopt, but the doors keep closing once people find out about the same sex couple or Shahid's religion. Gabe's best friend Kendra is still a little burned after divorcing her cheating husband, and while she does not think she is ready to have children she definitely wants to help Shahid and Gabe.

I had definite doubts about how book this would work out after reading the description. The author stacked a lot of different conflicts within the story – a same sex mixed religion married couple that evolves into a ménage. I felt that the author either did an appropriate amount of research on the religions or had enough knowledge beforehand to prevent conflict or misrepresent issues with sexuality and the religions. Instead of ignoring the potential issues with the relationships and the religions, she made a point of addressing them. She touched on issues with acceptance of Middle Easterners, Muslims, non-traditional sexed couples, and even ménage couples. In addition, she managed to not only retain the friendship between all the members of the romance throughout the conflict, but strengthened the relationship as a whole. With steamy scenes, genuine life conflicts, and likeable characters this book is a win.

Check out my full review here: <https://romancereviewsbyruckie.wordpress.com/2018/07/10/the-best-laid-plans/>
