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Heidi Cullinan , Marie Sexton

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Sometimes family chooses you.

How does a man get to be forty without knowing whether he's gay? That's a question Vince Fierro is almost afraid to answer. If he is gay, it'll be a problem for his big, fat Italian family. Still, after three failed marriages, he can't help but wonder if he's been playing for the wrong team.

There's only one way to settle it, once and for all—head for Chicago's Boystown bars, far from anyone who knows him. Naturally, he runs smack into someone from the neighborhood.

Between working two jobs, going to school, taking care of his grandmother, and dealing with his mother's ongoing substance abuse, Trey Giles has little time for fun, let alone dating someone who swears he's straight. Yet after one night of dancing cheek-to-cheek to the sultry strains of Coltrane, Trey finds himself wanting to help Vinnie figure things out—no promises, and no sex.

It seems like a simple plan, until their "no-sex" night turns into the best date of their lives and forges a connection that complicates everything.

Warning: This book deals with alcoholism, broken promises, and overbearing little sisters.

Family Man Details

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From Reader Review Family Man for online ebook

Elsa Bravante says

Tenía muchas dudas y es que yo sabía que no iba a ser lo mío.

Los protagonistas están bien, supongo que la historia también, pero todo lo que se mueve alrededor con el alcoholismo de la madre de uno de ellos y esa familia italiana mil veces representada en películas y series de USA, pues me ha parecido demasiado.

Me ha dejado como un pez, muy fría. Con un bah.

Optimist ?King's Wench? says

3.75 Hearts

Sooooo much to like!

This book has been in my TBR mountain since forever so I pounced when it came up in audio. Before I go into my thoughts on the book, let me just say that **Colin Darcy did a wonderful job narrating**. His Vinnie put a smile on my face repeatedly. My experience with Italian Americans is limited to *The Sopranos* so I've no clue if it's spot on or too much but I LOVED it. His Trey melted my heart. It was the sweetest voice! I don't know what he did to his voice for Trey but the timbre or whatever melted my butter. So, I will be actively looking for other books narrated by him in the future.

There are few tropes I like more than the age difference one and *Family Man* put the additional twist on of both men being virgins too! Well, Vinnie's only a virgin in same sex relations, but regardless I really liked this twist because it sort of leveled the playing field between them.

Vinnie having struck out in the marriage department three times decides maybe it's time to try to explore those attractions he's sublimated since college. Trey makes him feel things he's never felt before, things that are confusing and wonderful simultaneously.

What I liked so much about Vinnie was his authenticity. He's from a big, loud, very close knit family and they're important to him; he doesn't want to lose them. He also is falling hard for Trey and doesn't want to shortchange him either. The gamut of emotions he runs all felt very genuine, heartfelt and without artifice. He says what he thinks and does what he says he's going to. He also embraces his desires even though he fears being emasculated by them.

Trey is from the opposite end of the family spectrum. He's had to be self-reliant his whole life because his mother is an alcoholic. He has his gram but they are struggling to make ends meet and they are proud people. I could talk ad nauseam about Trey's childhood and how that probably relates to him still being a virgin who's waiting for The One at 25, but I won't. Suffice to say, he and Vinnie have much to learn from each other.

Family Man is a slow burn with oodles of UST and not a whole lot of sex, but their connection to and desire for one another is on display through both of their perspectives. However I would've liked more focus on their relationship development. There were so many things that occurred off page. Were this a movie a montage would've likely sufficed to show them spending more and more time together but as it stands it's just time jumps of them still being together and offhand references to past events.

I appreciated how the differentiation in their families was illustrated. Vinnie's family takes over.; if you're "family", you're family and they're in your life whereas Trey has had to live with disappointment. As someone with alcoholics in her family I felt for Trey, identified with his anger and respected his wariness. However, I think the focus shifted away from Vinnie and Trey to Trey's dysfunctional relationship with his mother towards the end. Unfortunately, the romance never regained traction and that overshadowing of the romance left me wanting. The ending felt rushed and left me wondering what about gram? what about Trey's mother? are the Fierro's just going to babysit her forever?

Unquestionably the ending is sweet and affecting but it also felt a wee bit disingenuous and I wasn't there yet. I needed Vinnie and Trey to have more time together. Another couple of chapters with them together, being fully immersed in each other's lives and getting acclimated to being out with Vinnie's family would've gone a long way.

Nevertheless, it's still a worthwhile read especially with regard to coming of age no matter your age and embracing who you are even if that person bucks traditional stereotypes.

A review copy was provided by the publisher.

Camille Adams says

Goodreads ate my first review, so here's my second attempt.

This wasn't bad. This wasn't extraordinary. It was just a run of the mill published m/m romance. Thus the three stars.

Some things of note though:

1. This book ends at 90% on my Kindle.
2. There is a plethora of the words "Italian", "family", and "gold chain". While this proliferation was silly and bordered on annoying, it was also just an employ of common words one would use to *tell* us the characterisation of an Italian MC. There was the standard dark, macho MC who ate a lot of pizza and pasta, whose big pushy, religious brood produces fiery, dramatic, emotive family members. Again, common fare. It was like an HBO/Wikipedia representation of a Chicago Italian clan. Nothing deviating from script.
3. The issues tip the balance and overwhelm the romance and potential sexiness of this story. I like and prefer substantive love stories. But, as several readers noted with *Dirty Laundry*, the book became about the anxiety. Here, the tale is taken over by the alcoholism etc. The heaviness and heavy-handedness leeched out the loveliness of blooming attraction and building love between these two men. It was like 95% drama that

makes the reader long for some sexy time on the page, and then when it comes it's jarring because it seems like an afterthought and is a bit hollow because it's so squashed in between the dark drama. I like the inclusion of real life issues, a love story that is grounded in reality, but the writing must be as such that the love and the light isn't lost. The sex was like trying to unearth a Playgirl/boy magazine while an Awake and a Watchtower are being shoved down your throat by Jehovah's Witnesses who won't take no for an answer.

Other than this, the characters were nice. I liked the moment of realisation. And the switch from the expected roles that each partner assumes is good.

I'm leaving my bias against all family smushiness out of this (for eg, how much sharing do/should siblings really practice? And at what point does self-preservation say kick the crazy to the kerb?), because the book is aptly and informatively titled, and I chose to read it.

That aside, I think I'll be hesitant to pick up Cullinan for a while, because while she is a good writer, technically, there is nothing imaginative there and her bid, I think, to be a serious writer, has led her writing to be too serious. And I don't mean she should write fluff. It's just there's a way to write 'real' without such a heavy hand on the Lifetime movie button.

Dan C. says

Yes, I read it already because I'm married to one of the authors. Seriously, this will knock your socks off.

Sheri says

Family.

Big or small....near or far...sweet or spicy....we've all got one.

Some are forged with blood, many are not.

Some are close, many have distance. However, when push comes to shove, when your life comes apart at the seams, your family is your foundation. '*Family man*' gives us a peek behind closed doors, at the good, the bad, and the ugly that family bestows.

Set in Little Italy in Chicago we find ourselves tossed into Vince's rut. A disastrous background in love and yet, he's not ready to throw in the towel. A plumbing mishap highlights that maybe plumbing has indeed been the problem all along. When Vinnie puts his research in motion he discovers the path of happily ever after is harder than he thought. Love isn't always easy and he questions if he can make the necessary sacrifices. Will he have to choose love over family? Or in the end, is it really a choice at all?

Sometimes life isn't fair and we are dealt a crappy hand of cards, and Trey was unfortunate to receive such a hand. Forced to grow up too fast, he's always been the giver. Working two jobs, going to college, and taking care of his elderly grandmother and addict of a mother is burning his candle at both ends. When he catches a familiar face in an unexpected place he can't help reach out. Against all logic he wants Vince. He's older, has a tarnished romance record, and is extremely lost. Why should he pursue this deeply confused closet case? His life has enough turmoil; shouldn't he run from this dark Italian target of heartbreak? Trey quickly

realizes the heart wants what the heart wants, and Vince is what his heart wants.

Both authors are favorites of mine and I adored their characters with equal intensity. I'll be honest and admit the alternating voices were fabulous, but the alternating POV pulled me from the story more than once. Truly that is my only complaint and may not even blip on your radar.

Give 'em a chance, watch them risk the fall because isn't that what we're all looking for after all?

4 *finding-falling-fabulous stars*

◆*Arianna◆* says

“*Family Man*” is a love and family story. It’s a story about hope and strength that will definitely make you feel.

Vince Fierro is a 38 years old Italian man. He works as a plumber, even if he has a MBA. Being a commitment-phobe, he divorced three times, so he wonders if he’s gay. He is confused, lonely, he feels like everything he’s doing is wrong. Trying to figure out if he’s gay or not, he goes in a gay club. There he bumps up into Trey, who is a regular in his family’s restaurant.

Trey’s life isn’t easy. At his 25 years old he works two jobs, takes different classes and he takes care of his grandmother and alcoholic mother. He is gay, out and proud, but he doesn’t date. And yes, he’s a virgin, but not because he didn’t have the opportunity to be with someone, but because he wants his first time to be with someone who loves.

When Vince and Trey meet they are immediately attracted to each other. They go out on a non-date, but things change, Vince realizing he’s not so straight as he thought he is and they start dating. Vince fears that his family will hate him if they find out he is gay, but he doesn’t care. Being with Trey feels right and he is happy. Trey is happy to be with Vince, the Italian man is all he ever wanted in a partner.

They have many ups and downs, but in the end both realize how perfect are for each other.

I really liked this one. It was emotional, heartwarming and heart broking at times. Both Vince and Trey are great characters. Lovable and real, both warmed my heart. My heart broke for Trey. He is a great guy. Very mature for his age, he does what everyone expects, he does everything to support his family, even sacrifice himself. I really felt for him. He is sweet and caring with his grandmother and Vince, but he's struggling with his feelings for his mother.

Vince was a wonderful character. He has such a big heart. He is loving, caring, supportive, patient and he is ready to do anything for Trey, whatever he needs, whatever he asks for. He makes Trey feel safe and loved every time he's with him.

Both Vince and Trey, all their struggles and all their fears felt real to me.

I liked how naturally their relationship progressed and I loved them together. Despite their age difference, they are perfect for each other. Vince's family is fantastic, not only to Vince when they found out about that he is gay, but with Trey and his family too. Loved them!

The ending was sweet and perfect for the two men, but I would have liked an epilogue.

Overall, "*The Family Man*" was a great read, low in angst with lovable characters and great writing.

Elsbeth says

This book was a bit difficult for me to rate, there were a lot of things that I loved, but there were also a lot of things that I find distasteful.

I really enjoyed the story of Trey's mother as an alcoholic, it was eye opening with the abuse of cough syrup. I had heard of kids drinking NyQuil, but not just drinking any cough syrup by the bottle. I also agree with Trey's standpoint on alcoholism as a disease, this will probably piss a lot of people off, but I have my reasons.

I also loved Vinnie's transition, how hard it was for him to come to terms with his sexuality, and how in doing so made him grow in other aspects in his life. I loved his family, especially his sister, and how even she wasn't perfect.

What I wasn't so thrilled about was the age gap, I am not a huge fan. I can see why the authors did it, but even so it was a bit on the extreme side for me.

I am also not a bit fan of the whole "waiting for marriage", and "saving myself for my soul mate". I am a firm believer in test the waters, see what you like, and don't like. You don't jump in and buy the first car you see, you test drive a few, and cars are not a life commitment.

So, all in all, I liked the story, and it made me think with both my likes and dislikes.

Susan says

3.5 stars...

Every Thanksgiving and Christmas I dread going home to my HUGE Korean extended family...aunts, uncles, and cousins (so many cousins)...forcing food down my mouth, nagging me about marriage and kids and jobs and life. I also LOVE it to death...because...well, it's FAMILY!

"Family Man" was the Italian version of the Lee Family holiday...except it's about 2 gay men...and there's actually a couple involved...and there's a lot more angst. Close enough.

Vince is an Italian Mafioso - j/k, he's actually a plumber...with an MBA (huh?); a commitment-phobe in relationships (3 divorces), jobs (all over the place), and sexual orientation (Am I gay? Maybe I'm not gay? Am I bi? Maybe I'm not bi?)

Trey is 10+ years his junior – a kid from the neighborhood, working 2 jobs, trying to put himself through school, taking care of his Grams, and trying hard not to be overwhelmed by his guilt for wanted his alcoholic mother out of his life. Oh yeah, and he's a virgin.

They are an unlikely pair who find themselves in love. And gosh darnit...it's sweet! We get to experience Vince and Trey dating, falling for each other, seeing each other through all kinds of life's struggles, and watching their love and commitment strengthen.

The POV changes from chapter to chapter (Vince's in 3rd, Trey's in 1st person...wut?) were confusing and at times annoying. And to be honest, the story really is all over the place.

BUT...I just really liked these 2 together...and I loved the BIG ITALIAN FAMILY coming together through thick and thin.

Enjoyable.

Elise X a.k.a Ryder's Pet X says

??????*Cute, but predictable*??????

The book centers around Parino Brothers Plumbing man (for now?) **Vincent 'Vince' 'Vin' Fierro** (38) and student and a worker for two jobs **Trey Oscar Giles** (25). Vince is having a crisis; he is gay? Is that why he hadn't succeeded in his love life? Why he feels alone even when he's surrounded by his big Italian family? So when he follows sister's advice: **check out a gay bar and see how it goes**. Vince is freaked, but he does it and his life gets changed forever. Trey is shocked to see Vince at a gay bar, but doesn't let that stop him from finally finding a man who doesn't expect sex, that doesn't call him a tease just because he want to wait to be in love before losing his virginity. Can Vince get over his fears and expect himself? Can Trey finally let himself hope after all he's been through?

"And just like that, it's over. And if you'd been stupid enough to let hope live, or if you'd been fool enough to believe the promise, you'd be crushed. Ruined by that bottle. But I know better now. I kill the hope before it can start. I ignore the promises. That's how I survive." He looked over at Vince, his blue eyes wide and vulnerable. "That's the only way to survive."

Overall, the story had real potential to be great. But, not much happened; it was predictable and bit slow. But that doesn't mean it's not worth reading, because it is. It was a cute story. I liked; it wasn't great, but it was a **nice, adorable read**. Vince was a great man; protective, kind and caring. Trey takes one day at a time, afraid to hope, but he's adorable and just need someone to take care of him for once, even if he refuses to admit it. Together they were good together. Filling out the other, so to speak. I do, however, wish we had

gotten more from the ending; what will happen in the future? **I want more of a closure**, you see. I have bigger problems now though; what to read next? Ugh.

For so long, I'd been hanging on to my virginity as if it was some kind of prize to be given away. It wasn't because I thought sex was a sin. It wasn't that I thought we had to be married. It was simply that I wanted it to matter. I wanted it to be with somebody who I thought was worth the risk of opening myself up.

Quick basic facts:

Genre: - (Adult) Contemporary Romance (M/M)

Series: - Standalone.

Love triangle? - (view spoiler)

Cheating? - (view spoiler)

HEA? - (view spoiler)

Favorite character? - Trey Oscar Giles.

Would I read more by this author/or of series? - Probably.

Would I recommend this book/series? - Yes.

Will I read this again in the future? - Probably not.

Rating - 3 stars.

Lyn says

2 frustrating and disappointing stars.

This book had such a great start. Vinnie is 38 and coming to terms with being gay after 3 failed marriages. Trey is 25 living with his grandmother and alcoholic mother, working two jobs and going to school. Vinnie and Trey aren't friends, but they know of each because they are from the same neighborhood. They bump into one another at a gay bar from there a friendship and relationship develops. That's the part I loved about this book.

What turned the tide from enjoyment to frustrating for me was Trey's constant struggles with his mom. It was sweet that Vinnie was always there to help and comfort him, but after a while, the story felt like it went from Vinnie and Trey building a relationship to Vinnie, Trey and his mom. Ugh!

By the time the book came to an end, I was rolling my eyes. Great being, got annoying mid way and cheesy ending.

Gigi says

Re-read Oct. 2015: 5 stars! Awesome book to re-read.

Super yummy romantic read!!!

Heidi Cullinan and Marie Sexton are keeping the M/M romance front and center with this charming tale of a thrice divorced Italian boy from a large Catholic family, Vinnie, who finds himself ready, at the late age of 38, to finally come to terms with his attraction to men. He quickly falls for young, down on his luck, Trey, and they take their relationship nice and slow, which makes for a beautiful romance between the two. I simply loved this book!

If you like strong, big, loud families who aren't afraid to speak their mind, big, hunky Italian men with a warm and fuzzy side, hard working, down on their luck virginal college boys looking for love, **I can 100% recommend this book.** You will absolutely fall in love with Vinnie and Trey. My only complaint with this book is that I would have loved to have had an epilogue.

Blacky *Romance Addict* says

I absolutely loved the romance here and this would've been 5 stars if not for the drama at the end, and I confess it was just a tad bit too sweet at the end as well :D but still it's a great one!!

Heather C says

Another wonderful Heidi and Marie collaboration!

What I loved:

- ◆ Trey and Vin...of course!! Vin, the big, manly Italian who needed to accept a few things about to himself. And Trey, the younger out and proud gay man. I loved the tenderness and passion between them.
- ◆ The date that wasn't date...very sweet
- ◆ The "no sex rule"...while providing prolonged sexual tension, it just felt right in their relationship to wait. No rush right? While all the kissing and making out was hot, when they finally made love it was beautiful and scorching! (view spoiler)
- ◆ Trey's grandmother...she easily accepted the relationship between Vin and Trey. And even provided a home for Trey's stupid, selfish mother.
- ◆ Vin's sister...I loved how she was nearly the female version of Vin and how she totally supported him 100%, even though she didn't understand sometimes
- ◆ "The Family"...enough said

What didn't bother me at all:

- ◆ The age difference: Trey was a very mature 25 year old and had been the main provider for his family for many years. Not your average college student. He was responsible and perfect for Vin, but Vin did fall into a role of protector over Trey. Don't worry, there was NO creepy daddy kink or anything like that.
- ◆ The point of view changes: Vin's pov was written in 3rd person, while Trey's pov was written in 1st. Odd...maybe? But DID NOT hinder my enjoyment of the story for even a second.

What I hated:

- ◆ Trey's mother and her selfishness. I thought the destruction from her alcoholism was very well portrayed in this story. (view spoiler)

In summary, this was a very sweet GFY story with TONS of sexual tension and very little angst. Perfect for me.

Please tell me this will not be the last Heidi and Marie together!

Heather K (dentist in my spare time) says

3.75 stars

An oldie but a goodie.

Honestly, I feel like I shouldn't have enjoyed this book as much as I did. For one, it switches from first person to third person from chapter to chapter, which should have driven me absolutely bonkers. It also features the typical Italian macho man stereotypes and a depressing alcoholic mother storyline, both of which are usually things that I don't enjoy.

But, alas, a coming out story (in his 40s!), a virgin, and an age gap make me a **VERY** happy girl.

I really like Heidi Cullinan and Marie Sexton separately, so it's no surprise that I like them together. Their writing styles blended well, and I think they made a nice team.

The story was super easy to read, and I raced through it in a little over a day. It was angsty without being over-the-top (though the horrible mother almost pushed me over the edge), but relationship-wise, it was pretty smooth sailing. I liked the chemistry of the two MCs together, and I REALLY liked some of the surprises that they had up their sleeve in the bedroom. Could have used even more heat, though, to be honest.

Overall, I don't think you could go wrong with this one, especially if you are a sucker for an older MC coming out for the first time. And, as is Heidi Cullinan's style, that ending will satisfy all readers who love to feel that "awwww" at the end of a romance.

Copy provided in exchange for an honest review

.Lili. says

Family Man by Heidi Cullinan and Marie Sexton is the epitome of a comfort read. I love stories about self-discovery and family, and this book delivers on both ends. This story is about 38-year-old Vinnie who is coming to terms with the fact that he may be gay. One evening he decides to go to a gay club and runs into Trey. He's known Trey since he was a kid but he's not a kid anymore. He's a hard working 25-year-old man who takes care of his mom and grandma while working two jobs and going to school. They hit it off and decide to hang out (as friends air quotes). Though what started as just a night out soon becomes too obvious to deny that there are more than just casual feelings involved.

Some highlights:

-The slow burn. Vinnie and Trey decide from the start they will take things slow, and the way their interactions are written allows the reader to know how deep their feelings for each other are despite them not taking their relationship to a physical level. We get lots of feels and UST. Boy, do the fireworks go off when they took the next step!

-The depiction of addiction. As someone who has dealt with a loved one's addiction, I appreciated the honest portrayal of living with someone who's an alcoholic. The broken promises, false hopes, and resentments. I felt Trey's feelings.

-Their patience with each other. Trey never pushed for more than Vinnie was comfortable with and Vinnie was Trey's support when he needed him most.

In the end, this book had everything that I love.

-Fleshed out characters that evolve throughout the story.

-It was emotional and honest.

-Sweet

-And the end left me with a feeling of warmth.

I HIGHLY RECOMMEND THIS BOOK.

ARC kindly provided to Gay Book Reviews by Dreamspinner Press