



The Experiment

Alicia Nordwell

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In the distant future, humans wage war against the alien planet Caerleia, with no tactic off-limits if it will help the humans get their hands on Caerleia's resources. Ask Ryker. He thought he volunteered for a simple experiment that would help his government in the war. He didn't realize sadistic doctors would turn him into the experiment—by injecting him with blood from a captured Caerleian, Seral Iorflas.

Nor did Ryker realize he'd be sent to sabotage a planet full of the very beings his world is battling, beings who kill humans on sight. But then, thanks to the experiment that irrevocably changed him, he isn't exactly human any longer—and with each passing day, as his blood bond with Seral strengthens, he's less and less sure as to whose side he's on.

The Experiment Details

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From Reader Review The Experiment for online ebook

Xing says

The Experiment wasn't what I expected and I was having a hard time getting into the story. I was expecting something a little bit more gritty and dark, since there is mention of experimental abuse with one of the characters. Plus, I'm having a hard time getting the concept of naked vampire-based alien species from another planet (similar in the sense of claws, fangs, and moments of neck-biting). There's a soul-bonding/mate feel reminiscent of werewolf shifter stories (between the main alien character and the human) and I kept getting turned off with the whole "I keep getting horny when the alien is close to me," especially in a culture where most everyone is naked. Felt a bit too porny for me.

The story feels very yaoi-ish, if that makes any sense. And so far, there's a lot more telling than showing, so it's hard for me to sympathize with an abused character since the history of abuse is "told" and his reaction to things don't always feel appropriate (i.e. the human MC was raped during his experimentation, but he gets pretty horny around his newly met alien mate).

So in all, it just didn't meet my expectation and mood. It doesn't mean the story was bad, just not by cuppa.

Kristy Maitz says

After being told a great news that we will get a new book in the same series I could not help myself to re-read 1 book one more time, but now I chose audio format.

14. 02.2014 - 4 stars

Story plot is not unique and is full of holes and questions but still end result is more than satisfying.

Both main characters Ryker and Seral are very interesting individual and reading goes smoothly.

Chris, the Dalek King says

“They’d lied to us.

We weren’t working on an experiment. We *were* the experiment.”

Five years ago Ryker was at the end of his rope. Broke, alone, and increasingly surrounded by the drumbeats of humanities war mongering, he took a chance at a new beginning. It seemed the government needed some people to help study the environmental safety of a planet they intended to colonize. As an ex lab-tech, Ryker figures he’s got as good a shot as any other candidate. And he does. He’s perfect. Except it was all a lie. And now, after five years of torture, rape, and being subjected to every test and experiment the scientists could think up, there isn’t very much left of the Ryker that left Earth in search of one last chance. After everything that has happened to him, he is not even human anymore.

When he is bonded genetically to the Caerleian prisoner, Seral, and dumped on the prisoner's home world in order to act as a spy, Ryker is nothing more than a scarred and terrified Caerleian-human hybrid. He doesn't know what to make of Seral, who claims to be Ryker's *isit*--basically husband/bondmate--or the strange family that is now claiming him as their own. Life, over the last five years, has taught him everything about pain and degradation, so he very much doubts that it has suddenly decided to listen to his broken please now. But when Seral looks at him...

I loved the aliens in this book. Seriously, they and the world they lived on were great. It felt like someone actually took the time to think up an alien that was different enough to make me curious, but real enough that I didn't spend most of the book totally confused as to what exactly it was that I am supposed to be imagining. I found it cool that the author made these aliens feel unique. And loved seeing them react to the various noises that Ryker makes, especially his laughing.

The connection/love between Ryker and Seral was very well written. It didn't feel like insta-love, though it certainly had enough of the traits. The bonding between them connected them, but it felt like the romance had to grow at its own pace. After everything that Ryker had been through, it was nice to see that he didn't automatically take one look at Seral and want to jump his bones. Trust became want, became desire, became love. And while I would have liked for the love part to have held off a bit longer, it never felt out of place when it did crop up. There were also some hot biting scenes which pleased me greatly. Oh the joys of sex with vampiric aliens...(feel like I should mention they are not in fact vampires, they just have a lovely set of fangs and a penchant for nibbling on their bed partners).

There are several aspects of this book that didn't quite work with me. Ryker turns into a bit of an annoying, whining, ass, and Seral into an overprotective he-man cliché. It was only for a bit, but it was not pleasant to read all the same. I get that Ryker feels the need to do something, to help the man he loves...but for the love of all that is shiny and sweet can we please stop having characters, after taking a hit to their ego, sneak off convinced that they clearly know better than anyone else that ever existed? It makes me want to start shooting people. I swear this cliché pops up in ? of all action-orientated stories. And I want it to stop. I don't like that I can pick up a story and know exactly how the climax is going to come about. It kills the fun. I read for the fun. Please stop trying to kill my fun.

Also, the reveal of the traitor...*Really?* Like there was no build up whatsoever to that reveal. The character basically turned from fun-loving to crazed and power-hungry in like the length of a few pages. It made no sense. None. I get that it was supposed to be a surprise, but you don't live with someone that long, know them their whole lives and care for them that deeply without seeing at least some aspects of raging psycho-killer pop up at some point. It just felt *incredibly* forced.

I was impressed by this novel. While there were some points where it fell into cliché, it never seemed to stay there for long, and it always strived to work everything into a clear plot. The writing was entertaining enough that I didn't want to stop reading, and I was drawn to these characters from almost their first words. And can I say it was refreshing to read a SciFi novel that doesn't feel the need to explain every single detail to me? Books that basically have their first chapter read as "This is the History of the Universe and Every Organism Found in it" bore me to tears. I really felt like the author trusted us to simply stick with the story, to learn as we go along, and I have to say that was wonderful. And not just because it actually made the story flow right from the beginning. We knew what we needed to know, when we needed to know it, and the rest of the minutia was left to our imaginations. And since most of the characters were naked for good portion of the book...it was rather pleasant imaginings. I had a lot of fun in this world (three cheers for cultural-based nudity!), and I hope that there is another book in the series so we get a chance to go back and learn some more.

This book was provided free in exchange for a fair and honest review for Love Bytes. Go there to check out

other reviews, author interviews, and all those awesome giveaways. Click below.

SueM says

I read this story some time ago when Cia (aka Alicia Nordwell) had this story published on-line. Having enjoyed the on-line version, as well the author's contribution to the M/M Romance Group's Love Has No Boundaries event, I was interested to see if there was much difference between the two versions. Admittedly my memory may not be all that clear, but it seems there is no fundamental change.

Earth that has long-plunged into desolation - trees and grass are only found in vids, and winter rule much of the year - with few employment opportunities for the population. Down to his last few days in a tiny box-like apartment he could no longer afford, Ryker volunteered to a science experiment - the reality of which turned out to be far different from the one he thought he had signed up for.

The experiment he found himself in was one that aimed at finding a way to win a war against an alien species. Having successfully capturing one of the aliens, Seral, the scientists decide upon a barbaric plan. With the help of the "volunteers" and using Seral's blood, they aimed at genetically changing humans to match the aliens -- creating spies that would blend in seamlessly on Seral's home world. Of course, they didn't quite plan on how using Seral's blood to create the now-modified humans might affect one in particular - Ryker.

Against his will, Riker finds himself responding to Seral - but having undergone five years of torture, he only expects more pain and perhaps death when the scientists dump him, along with Seral, on Seral's home world. Ryker, though, would never have imagined that Seral would also respond in return.

This story almost has an insta-love feel, yet avoids it through the explanation of scientific experimentation. It is told from alternating points of view - Seral and Ryker's - and I liked seeing the how different interpretations of events - quite disparate at first - slowly grow more aligned as the two men grow closer - physically and emotionally. There is a little of the "helpless female" role about Ryker requiring "rescue" from the strong male character, but fortunately this diminishes as the story as the story moves forward. All in all, I enjoyed re-visiting the story, and look forward to the next in the series.

Lilia Ford says

I found this a fun read, and I'll probably read the next part if there is one since Nordwell successfully raised my curiosity about late-arriving characters like Dade and Nicklaus. It's safe to say I'm a fan of any and all variations of the alien abduction story, and a downright sucker for the big-tough alpha alien meets meek earth-boy plotline. This was more of an engaging play on the familiar elements of that story rather than an exploration of new territory. Sadly but predictably, our toppy vampiric alien turns out to be a big marshmallow, whose dominance consists of overprotectiveness and a willingness to devote his life to making his mate happy. Still, the book was much better written than the average alien abduction story, the plot had enough twists and adventure to keep me interested, and I liked both MCs--enough to feel happy when they were happy. The good chemistry and hot manlove scenes were also quite appreciated.

I was most dissatisfied with "the experiment" itself, namely the account of Ryker's extreme abuse at the hands of "doctors." It's a pretty common set up, and is evolving into a major pet peeve of mine: The

sequence reminded me of Laurann Dohner's New Species series or more recently Seven, where you have these evil scientists who are so monstrous they lose any resemblance to actual human beings and because of that are fundamentally uninteresting as either characters or even social phenomena. (As a contrast I would posit the people involved in judicial torture in Manna Francis' Mind Fuck, who are riveting both in themselves and for the system they represent.) I get especially frustrated and impatient because a good villain, one with some genuine charisma and motivation, is often enough to make me obsess over an otherwise ho-hum book. I am hoping the evil but sorta sexy council-member, Buphet, who was casting lustful looks at Ryker from the margins will reappear in the sequel--maybe he could kidnap him and take him to his lair!

Enough of the rant. Bottom line: I'd already DNF'd three books this weekend, but this I finished with enthusiasm. If there is a sequel I will read it.

Sandra says

3.75 stars I love sci-fi romance. I love sexy aliens. I love it.

They started well with a first person POV from Ryker on the ship. We didn't have to witness any of his horrible abuse first hand, of which I am thankful, but we did get to hear him recount and/or think about some of it while still there and with his captors. This gives it more power and I felt a stronger connection with him, than if it was a flashback or memory sequence.

A couple chapters go by and I was on the edge of my seat hoping we would get Seral's POV and... WE DID! This was in third person, not sure why the change, but I guess it made the book feel a little more focused on Ryker. The change really didn't bother me, I barely noticed, but I'm sure there are some it would drive crazy.

As to the plot, I liked it. We're no stranger to the humans-are-asshole-space-invading-parasites-trying-to-steal-your-planet plot, but it works for a reason. Humans have destroyed Earth and are looking for new resources. Ryker's role as an experiment is as an implanted spy to gather information and make conquest easier, since they were running into some trouble, and the scientists expected him to be quickly killed. Now here I had a couple criticisms.

The whole abuse scenario does seem a bit far fetched. I get that people are assholes, and left to their own devices can be horrible. But why did they need 'volunteers' at all? Weren't there some loyal soldiers who would volunteer as an undercover agent to go spy on the planet. Maybe since they assume the aliens were savages, and didn't think someone could infiltrate in that way. But the abuse was pretty extreme and at times a little over the top.

Once Ryker and Seral are on the planet, it progresses as expected and did at times remind me of a personal favorite The Last Pure Human by Twisted Hillarity. Seral 'claims' Ryker without Ryker knowing what's going on yet. Seral needs to win his trust. They feel drawn to each other and fall in lust, then love. Not everyone trusts this newcomer and some political machinations occur (although not too much). Ryker begins to recover emotionally and gain confidence again.

That's great, but related to Ryker's confidence, this hit a few pet peeves: 1) someone using "girly" as an insult or self-deprecating comment for crying, being emotional, or in some way unreasonable. 2) the seemingly more submissive/in less control partner getting sassy and not listening to the other when in a military or work

related situation where not only does the other guy know more about what's going on and have more experience, but it's a huge safety risk to you both and others! (ie: "you can't leave me behind!" It's a fucking military mission you idiot and you are in NO way qualified!)

Now to the sex! :) It was hot, but there actually wasn't a ton of it. Once their relationship became intimate it seemed that's when the plot developed as well so they got distracted. This is fine, except they tried to bring it back at the end. Personally, I like my sex in the middle. Once we have the climax of the plot or a big battle, I tend to skip sex scenes because by that point I'm more interested in plot resolution. This becomes a problem when I skip a sex scene only to realize... it was the last chapter.

It shouldn't have caught me totally off guard. I knew we were wrapping up, and most large loose ends were tied. There were a few small loose ends introduced near the end of the book, that will either be a perfect second/third book or simply make us feel as if the world goes on. I would definitely be interested in reading another book on this planet (view spoiler).

Overall this was a fun, complex, and creative sci-fi romance that I thoroughly enjoyed.

Received from the publisher in exchange for an honest review, reviewed for Hearts On Fire

Vivian says

Gritty beginning with rainbows and unicorns ending.

So I expected this to be darker, or rather, darker for longer than it was. After the start it turned very lovey-dovey and played into the possessive, caring, bigger male and delicate, smaller, feisty male theme which is fine. Not my favorite, but I'll roll with it.

I guess I wanted more of this:

Seral lifted his wrist to his mouth and licked at the bite marks. "It didn't hurt. You may not have fangs, but I liked it when you bit me.

But it quickly became sweet. Very sweet.

There's evil guys to thwart, a traitor to reveal and a few cultural misunderstandings to overcome. Nice set of new characters introduced at the end which would actually encourage me to read their stories: Dade and Nicklaus.

So, I ended up reading something much fluffier than I expected, but enjoyed it.

Nikyta *Miss Forgetful* says

This review can be found at The Blogger Girls review site.

For five years, Ryker has been experimented on to look like a Caorleian, not to mention tortured and abused. When his transformation is complete, he's unwillingly sent onto the planet Caorleia with the captured alien, Seral. Unfortunately, whatever the scientists did to him forced a bond between Ryker and

Seral. He doesn't expect to live for long but Seral surprises him and before he knows it, he's created a life he never thought he'd have again. But someone isn't happy about Seral and Ryker surviving, forcing them to fight off many attempts on their lives. Can they figure out who the traitor is before one of them is seriously hurt or will the war between the Caeorleians and humans only escalate?

A word of caution: The blurb is a little misleading, IMO. Specifically, "and with each passing day, as his blood bond with Seral strengthens, he's less and less sure as to whose side he's on." Ryker never questions which side he's on. Even in the beginning when he was scared of all Caeorleians, he knew, no matter what, he wasn't going to do anything to aid the very humans that tortured him.

Regardless of that, I really enjoyed this sci-fi story. The world Ms. Nordwell created is very intriguing and I loved how different but similar the Caeorleians were compared to regular humans. The fact that they speak differently and communicate by humming and vibrations was fascinating not to mention the fact they're alien vampires. I also loved experiencing the bond developing between Ryker and Seral. I found the idea behind the isitziu (the markings on their body) interesting and how in the bond, one person is the isit and the other the tzui. Honestly, I just loved the planet and the new customs surrounding the Caeorleians.

Ryker and Seral together are both hot and sweet. Ryker, while terrified and weak in the beginning, grows stronger and has no problems being stubborn to his mate, which I found very amusing. Seral is the classic alpha male. Very possessive, protective and 'hear me roar!' but I did love his gentleness when handling Ryker. Even though he had a tendency to coddle Ryker more than necessary, I loved their interactions together. By the end, Ryker grew comfortable enough to not only stick up to Seral when he did something brainless but they also developed an easy banter.

While I really enjoyed the book, I had a few issues. For one, I feel like Seral's race and the planet are still one big mystery. By the end of the story, I had so many questions about everything. Why was Seral in on the strategy meetings but the heir to the throne wasn't? Why did Dade have fangs and claws but Ryker didn't? Those are only two of the dozens more questions I have. On top of that, there was a little too much sex for my liking and mixed with them doing it when one or both of them were hurt, it grew a tad excessive.

Overall, this was a great book. It captured my attention from the start when everything seemed so bleak and held it until the end when things worked out. I loved getting to see Ryker adjust to a new and strange world and seeing Seral do everything he could to make Ryker at home. I hope there's more to come of this world because I'd love to see Fieo and Nicklaus find their happy ending.

Just a note, this story is told in both first-person and third-person narrative. Ryker's point of view is told in first-person and Seral's is told via third-person. It's disorienting at first to adjust to the switches but once I got into the groove of things, I barely noticed it, even though this style is not one of my favorites.

?? Michaele ♡? says

3.0 Stars

Holy hell this was a lot of effort to slog through. At times I *loved it*; the scifi elements, the alien society...even some of the OTT drama. BUT - if it weren't for the audio I don't think I'd have finished it because it was just so...too much? Like, a good editor would have tightened up the story to eliminate unnecessary or confusing scenes. Plus, the drama (while OTT) was also a bit juvenile? IDK how to explain it...like, things were made into a big deal and overly emotional when it would have played out better in a more mature manner? Ack, wording today I'm not good at.

As for the audio, yes it helped me get through the story. It was also over-acted in a lot of places. Don't get me wrong, at first I loved that when a bit of dialogue is "yelled" the narrator actually YELLED IT. (Rarely do I ever hear that.) But after a while that got on my nerves. Because there was a lot of dramatic yelling.

I'm not reading/listening to the second one (it's MF) and unless I need it for a challenge I'm not likely to read the third one either (even though it's MM). God, I'm so depressed about this one because I wanted to love it; that blurb is written like it was meant for me and I was so looking forward to it...

Edited to add: Oh, my biggest question about this whole plot was why a civilian was picked for the experiment? Well, Tamara asks the same question and elucidates why it was a terrible idea not to use a soldier or other genetic construct.

Skye Blue ?*~??('`?)~*? says

Extra star for audio.

Without the audio, idk if I would have made it. Not due to poor writing or anything, just the genre.

The narration was enjoyable, as was the story.

It started off really good. It took a fluffy bunny turn. Which, was okay. I just expected it to go a little gritty and dark. But it's okay, it was still good.

For it's genre, it is one of the better ones that I have read. I liked Seral and Ryker.
Fun book.

Bookwatcher says

The plot

In a future, Earth is in war against Ceaorleia... humans want that planet, their resources... what humans will sacrifice to win this war?

Oh so simple... what a greedy human would do to win, what would be done? Where would be the limit in the human need to conquer another world? **No limit...nothing would be too much... neither use humans as weapon**

Meet Ryker, an unlucky human, volunteer in what he thought was just a scientific experiment.

It was... but he could never guess HE would be the guinea pig... the "animal" used in the experiments.

The story begin with Ryker... no longer a human... now.. an alien as Ceaorleia habitants.

Original? I said it's original... how much? Because let's face it, it's hard to find good and original stories!

Well, I will not spoil but I must say everything, from Ceaprelian's humming vibrations language, from the alien planet itself, I love everything. Each detail, everything was perfect and VERY original!

It's an abuse (non consensual sex) story? There is kidnapping no?

No.

There is no rape scene, and yes, Ryker is traumatized but it's just some facts, he will remember but never tell you, even when he is the narrator.

What? Even WHEN he is the narrator? There will be more than one point of view?

YES

oh GOD yes! And guess what... there will be an alien POV... Seral.

Seral is a native from the alien planet and will know Ryker in a very unpleasant situation... it's a romantic story, you must read to know. I WILL NOT spoil saying more.

There is something that made me squееееее in delight?

oh damn YEAH!

It was... Seral wildness! He is view from Ryker as something close to... a vampire! Long claws, drinking blood, long fangs, black eyes, pale skin... BUT don't think it's one of those vampires you read somewhere! No, complete original story, also this "vampire" aspect of the race is very interesting and I LOVE IT

Romantic, but not sappy... sci-fi, but the perfect balance between action and description of alien world and behaves... Once a online freebie, now published, it was a delight surprise then and again now rereding the published version, and made me want to read much more! All about this couple and their unusual love

A broken man, a wild alien vampire... can it be possible? Can they... love each other, in times of war? A tziu and his isit... soul mates, despite all their efforts... war is war, and the seek for power can be a danger for both of them.

I wish I could give more than 5 stars. This story is amazing, and I certainly recommend it to all readers searching a sci-fi, but also a very sweet love story.

Leandra says

This book was so good and there is just too much going on for me to explain everything(Plus there are people on here that do it much better) so just read it. I'm not a big SF reader so if I loved it and you're not sure, just go ahead and try it. It had lots of action but it also had romance. I really hope this isn't the end. I would give it more than 5 stars if I could.

Chappy says

Holy crap, this book was amazing.

Right off the bat, it pulled me into Ryker's painful story. He's been tricked by Earth's government and taken on a ship to an alien world. During the 5 year journey, the Doctor's experimented on him, hurt him, abused him and turned him into something not quite human. He's not sure how he survived but knows he can't take much more.

When they finally arrive to Caeorleia, the doctors plan to release him along with Seral; an alien who's also been held captive. They hope to plant Ryker as a spy and find a way to take over the planet. What the doctors

didn't anticipate, was the immediate bond that formed between Ryker and Seral.

This story is super steamy and full of adventure. It's really well written with good plot and character development. Can't wait to read more.

Heather K (dentist in my spare time) says

This book will have wildly different ratings depending on the reader. Some people will love this one, unfortunately, I didn't.

From the blurb, I anticipated a gritty alien-torture sci-fi with a slow-burn romance. That isn't what this book is like at all, so be forewarned. It is much more similar to yaoi-style books: Insta-love (or close to it), forced mating, a top and bottom with defined roles... you get the idea. However, I actually *like* some yaoi books, so I could have adjusted to the change from my expectations to the reality of the book. My main issue is that this book is *very* similar in concept and feel to "The Last Pure Human" by Twisted Hilarity (<http://www.twistedhilarity.com/fictio...>), which is unfortunately no longer listed on Goodreads because the librarians have been removing unfinished works. However, "The Last Pure Human" was much better in every way, I'm afraid. I'll try not to compare the stories too much and just analyze this on its own, but it will be a struggle because I compared the two stories often while reading.

I'll go into some of my biggest problems with this story. For one, I didn't feel the chemistry between the two MCs. Ryker was way too accepting of Seral, especially considering his history of abuse while in captivity. Ryker seemed to just glide into a healthy relationship and welcome his new role as alien-husband with ease. I wanted much more emotion, more tension there. I felt like it read really false. I think that even though they had binding marks on their bodies, the romance should have been more slow-burn.

I also had some issues with the world-building. It felt underdone and half-hearted. Except from a few strange fruit and animals, Ryker didn't seem too surprised at the alien world. He fell into step too easily and I think it was a missed opportunity to add some excitement into the story.

What I really struggled with, though, was the style. It felt a soap opera-ish and I didn't love the shifting first person POVs. I sometimes *love* first person POV, but here, it felt like the easy way out. I felt like I was being told, rather than shown, how the characters were feeling. I also often found myself growing bored and it took some real effort to force myself to finish.

Like I said earlier, I think many will really like this book. It isn't bad, just not my tastes and not what I was expecting. I think fans of books like *Slave Auction* by Stormy Glenn will enjoy this story.

****Copy provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review****

ttg says

Overall I thought *The Experiment* was a pretty fun sci-fi romance. The story follows human Ryker, whose body is altered by human scientists as part of their war against another alien race. The experiments are very much against his will, and to his horror, he and one of the aliens they're fighting against are ejected into a

shuttle and sent to the alien's planet.

There, Ryker expects a quick death by the aliens' hands, but instead, is faced with a much gentler treatment than what he experienced by his own kind. He is forced to confront who are his real enemies, and also who he is now in this new altered body.

I am a fan of the "forced marriage" trope when it's not rape-y, and thankfully, that's where this story falls as Ryker and his fellow alien captive Seral have to "join" to survive because of what the scientists had injected into them before they were released. Seral, who feels a deep connection to his new mate Ryker, understands that Ryker is *not* at the same place as him, nor does he understand any of Seral's culture, including what it means to join, so he patiently and carefully enfold Ryker into his world without pressuring him.

Ryker is suffering from severe PTSD from his trauma during his years of being experimented on. Even with his trauma, the story isn't *too dark* because those painful experiences are not detailed and graphic, which I appreciated. If you dislike non-con and torture like me, know that *The Experiment* is not too graphic, and much of the focus is on his recovery and adjustment to his new world and to his new alien husband.

In this way, the book reminded me of the movie *Avatar* since it shared some similar traits of entering into (and falling in love with) an alien world, and how the world you are from may actually be the enemy to watch out for.

As a heads-up: the dynamic between smaller Ryker and larger Seral has kind of a yaoi-esque seme/uke tone and reading this reminded me of Rob Colton and Rowan McBride and other m/m writers that often focus on the protective larger mate and the protected smaller mate tropes, although the characters here are not as burly & hairy as in Colton's seminal novel *Timber Pack Chronicles* nor did it have muscles bursting out of clothes like in McBride's works. (Although there were clothes being torn off with claws literally before some sexy times.)

If you are adverse to that school of characters, you may have a harder time with this story. Even as Ryker grows stronger, and faces his fears after his trauma, the dynamic follows that yaoi-esque path. I've read and enjoyed a lot of yaoi, so it worked fine with me, but I know some don't like those tropes, so heads-up.

Even with the seme/uke dynamics, I did really like Seral and Ryker's chemistry, and I'm a fan of a good healing relationship story. It didn't fall too hurt/comfort where it was overwhelming on comfort, and I did feel like it was a good level of understanding and space for a character who was very traumatized. It was easy to sympathize with Ryker's fears of intimacy and trust, which made his slow bloom back to life even nicer to read.

Near the end of the book, some characters were introduced that, to a learned romance reader's eye, reveals the seeds for future couples, so it looks like this is the first book of a series. For readers who hate cliffhangers (like me), please know that the ending here is satisfying, so even if more books come out, you will not be left hanging here.

This novel was born as a free serial on GayAuthors.org, and there, you can read the second book in the series *Adverse Effects* for free (and it just was completed.)

Nordwell, under penname Cia, has a bunch of free stories, novellas, and novels on GayAuthors.org, so if you like her style, there's a lot to check out there (along with her published works.)

Do I recommend this book? I do if you're a big sci-fi romance fan, and if you're fine with the big/small traditional yaoi dynamic. Nordwell did introduce some cool word-building, including the culture of joining, and how it's different on Seral's world, and I thought that was pretty neat.

Will I read the next book? Yes, I would read the next book. I'm intrigued enough about Seral's world and with following the future of the other characters who were introduced in the book.

Overall, a fun, intriguing imaginative sci-fi read with a good mix of romance and action (and sexy times.)

Review first posted to Boys in our Books.
