



Playing by Heart

J.B. Salisbury

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Jesse Lee is the worst!

He's a multi-millionaire, triple-platinum-selling, Grammy-Award-winning man-slut—a worldly, self-indulgent heathen. I wouldn't sleep with him if he were our last chance to ensure survival of the human race. The only reason I put up with him is because he's my boss's brother.

Whatsherface is one of those holier-than-thou types.

She's bossy, has a horrific singing voice, and she's so ordinary, she practically blends in with the eggshell-colored walls—the complete opposite of anyone I'd bang. The only reason I put up with her is because my career is on the line.

Playing by Heart is an enemies-to-lovers romance where opposites not only attract, they ignite.

Playing by Heart Details

Date :

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Author : J.B. Salisbury

Format :

Genre : Romance, Music, Contemporary, New Adult

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From Reader Review Playing by Heart for online ebook

Snow says

An okay read for me, I love rockers and I can't really stay away from such themed books even though they are mostly cliché and it's all been said and done before.

So nothing new here either, a washed up, drunk and drugged off rock star Jesse Lee, destroys his career and his band by, over using before mentioned substances along with the long line of sexual encounters...as well as using the 'I love you' way too much in a meaningless sex.

He has a choice to make, pushed by his manager Dave, this time, he needs not only to clean himself up but re-define the notion of who Jesse Lee is.

Instead of another trip to rehab, Jesse is sort of pushed by his manager to go back to a small town where his brother, a Pastor, lives, with his little girl.

Jesse will detox, find forgiveness and make peace with his past, his brother...and he will also find love, for the first time in his life.

In a small town girl, Bethany, who believes in love but was cast away roughly after her ex made her promises of love and forever...

Her faith in love is anything but firm, she won't even take a glance at this badass sex on a stick rockstar invading her space...and yet she somehow finds herself spending more and more time with the real Jesse...or so she thought...

A little bit of drama, a little bit of angst, miscommunication and avoidance cause a rift between them as Bethany quickly accepts Jesse's words: I love you.

Feeling they came much too soon, she's afraid they are tossed in the air as meaningless...and she won't be hurt like that again...and now, Jesse needs to prove himself the only way he knows how...through music, and **Playing by heart** and once he has her in his arms again, he won't ever let her go.

"I love you too." I kiss her softly. "More than I'll ever be able to show you in one lifetime. But I'll die trying. You have me now. You've owned me from the start. There's no playbook on how to love you, so I'll keep playing by heart."

ConfessionsofaRomanceJunkie says

Reviewed by: Candice

Wow! What a ride this book was!

Some of you may assume that this book is yet another one of the many manslut “hero” and “good girl” heroine romance tropes out there, and you wouldn’t be wrong but I promise you there is so much more to this story than you may expect, and it truly makes this book one of a kind.

JB Salsbury has a way of captivating her readers with her words.

You are affected by every emotion the characters experience. You hurt for them, you cry, you rage, and cheer them on. They become a part of you and you are fully invested in their lives.

Jesse is a complex man. On the surface, he’s an entitled spoiled rockstar with an indulgent lifestyle and without a care as to who his actions may hurt. He’s easy to dislike, in fact, you may even wonder how the heck this a\$\$ hole is the “hero”?!

Bethany comes across as a bit of a doormat. She’s endearing yet frustrating, relatable for those like me, who love to please but you also can’t help but want to shake some sense into her at times.

Sounds like a recipe for disaster for these two right?

Let me just say this is a TRUE enemies to lovers romance.

The character growth in both Jesse and Bethany as the book progresses is astounding.

This is a book of heartbreak, self-discovery, healing, and redemption.

Playing by heart will, in fact, play with your heart in the unforgettable way a reader appreciates!

Pavlina Read more sleep less blog♥♥ says

4 stars

I really liked Playing By Heart , it was a fun, lighthearted , sweet and sexy read.The romance was great, it's slow burn and intense.

I loved their moments together , they have some passionate moments and at the same time some really funny moments. This story had a little bit of everything.

It's a great read, I loved how the story goes.So many great books this year from J.B. Salsbury .

Gitte TotallyBookedBlog says

“You might want to consider redefining your definition of love.”

Love. **L.O.V.E.** Four letters that conjure up many different perceptions. Love can be sweet and soothing, chaotic and passionate, or just damn confusing, and in *Playing by Heart*, the new enemies to lovers, rock star romance where two opposite attracts, we experience the many facets of love through the complicated relationship between the cocky fallen bad boy rock star, Jesse Lee and the sweet, sometimes irrational good girl, Bethany Parks, who more than gives him a run for his money!

“If we lived in a dystopian society and sleeping with you meant I’d get sunshine and oxygen and all the food I could eat as well as preserving the human race for future generations, I still wouldn’t touch you.” I step closer and his eyes flare, which pisses me off. “I would rather die of scurvy and kill all hope of the survival of mankind than have s-e-x with you.”

“so....let me get this straight. That’s a no?”

Jesse Lee has pushed his luck one time too many. He’s a self-destructive diva, whose bedded numerous women, lost himself in drink and drugs and burned just about every friendship and business associate he has. His manager, Dave has had enough and issues Jesse with an ultimatum. He has ninety days to sort himself out, get clean and find his songwriting mojo to work his way back into the record companies’ good graces. Jesse thinks he’s headed to some swish rehab centre, however, he’s been shipped off to Surprise Arizona to detox in the bedroom of his estranged older brother’s house.

Ben Langley, Jesse’s brother, is the local pastor, a widowed single Dad who is charged with keeping the wayward Jesse in line, but the brothers have many issues to work through, and Jesse has demons aplenty he also needs to deal with. Can Jesse sort himself out, and make a comeback without the drugs?

Jesse really did test us with his diva attitude, but he was a bad boy rock star after all, and we waited through the slow burn with him and Bethany, for him to redeem himself. Would he, could he?

“You’re not a good person.”

“I know. But when I’m with you.....I’m hopeful that one day I could be.”

We have to point out that we were more than a little intrigued by the gorgeous pastor Langley! He certainly held our interest and JB Salsbury if you’re reading this....**we want Ben and Ashleigh’s book. For all that is holy, this has to happen!** Ben was sweet and sexy and someone we’d love to know better.

What Jesse didn’t count on was Bethany Parks, the young lady who works part time looking after Ben’s four year old daughter Elliot. Bethany is nursing a broken heart from her ex-boyfriend, Wyatt, and is the constant target of Jesse’s rude, grouchy ways, and she’s less than impressed with his behaviour! Jesse is equally unimpressed by her awful singing voice and the way she butchers the lyrics to songs, which is absolutely hilarious we might add! We’ll never listen to *Dirty Deeds* in the same way ever again!

“Being one of a million women isn’t the same as being someone’s one-in-a-million”

Bethany confounds and confuses Jesse, Jesse infuriates Bethany, but there’s a spark and an emotional connection they begin to explore. We loved seeing this side of JB Salsbury and know we’re pretty sure you’ll enjoy Jesse and Bethany’s convoluted love story, as well as the secondary characters and snarky interactions.

This is a story of redemption, that sweet and sexy, funny and witty, angsty and passionate – a rock star romance with a slow burn, enemies to lovers feel that shows that opposites really can attract.

‘When she moves it’s as if she’s lighter than air and only her shoes keep her from floating away. If I walked close enough to her I bet she’d bear my burdens without even knowing she was doing it.’

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Jenny - TotallybookedBlog says

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Naadira Moodley (BookedMercy) says

“Being one of a million women isn’t the same as being someone’s one-in-a-million”

This book made my heart so blissfully happy. I devoured it in one sitting. It has an amazing take on love which I freaking adored.

Jesse is a strung out rock star who has been blowing his chances. His vices are sex, drugs and alcohol. He is a first grade man whore. He equates sex to love. I genuinely dislike books where the hero sleeps with any woman with a vagina but Jesse managed to steal a piece of my heart. He managed to push his label too far

and has no other option but to clean up his act.

Bethany has just gone through a bad break up and is not totally over her ex. She works as a nanny and a waitress to make up for a mistake she committed. It was definitely not love at first sight when she meets Jesse. He finds nothing remarkable about her and although she finds him insanely hot, she would not go down that road. It takes them quite some time to have a semblance of a normal conversation. I love how she did not get down on her knees for him just because he is a multi-million dollar rockstar. He pushed her and she pushed back twice as hard. There was a point where I thought he is going to be a lost cause (because of his man-whore ways) but he did not do anything to make me dislike him. He has a warped sense of love but he managed figure out the true meaning of that word with Bethany's help.

The supporting characters are amazing as well and I want to know more about Ashleigh. Her story would be hilarious and HOT. This book cemented the fact that JB Salsbury has now become one of my favorite authors.

Dilek VT says

3,5 stars

“There’s no playbook on how to love you, so I’ll keep playing by heart.”

Weird book it is! It made me feel all the contradicting emotions.

PLAYING BY HEART is a fun and light read that infuriates you at the beginning and makes you laugh later and finally it makes you warm and fuzzy.

I was really bored and repulsed with it at the beginning. The hero is a rock star who used women, booze and drugs for the high he needed and finally he hit the rock bottom in his career. His manager gives him a last chance: To spend 90 days with his brother in the small town he was born, attending an AA group meetings, seeing a therapist and of course, staying away from all the stuff that made him forget about his priorities: music and his career.

He hasn't written a song for such a long time. He was partying wildly and not remembering anything in the morning because of the drugs, alcohol and cocaine. Now, he has to accept his manager's conditions or his recording company will cut all ties.

A hero who is addicted to drugs, cocaine & alcohol is a huge turn-off for me. His group sex sessions and his lack of morals that results in situations like sleeping with his drummer's fiancé also didn't help.

And obviously, I DESPISED him.

When he starts to live in his brother's home, there is no booze, no drugs and no women other than the nanny who comes to look after his brother's daughter. Our hero, Jesse, finds her simple and ordinary but because she is the only one around, he hits on her.

And it goes something like that: "Hi .. hello.. Wanna f*ck? Come to my bedroom quickly before I change my mind."

Peachy, right? Who wouldn't love such a hero?!!

The heroine, Bethany, doesn't follow him to his room and when she doesn't show up, he doesn't understand why she didn't accept it when he offered her his d*ck!

I pull up the image of nanny whatsherface—fuck, what was her name? No matter. Her skinny legs, flat chest, and makeup-free face shouldn't do it for me, but what can I say? I'm desperate. She's female. And in that ridiculous outfit that does nothing for her already non-existent curves? Fuck, how is this shit keeping me hard?

*"You want to explain why you left me with my nuts in my stomach yesterday?"
I startle at the hostility in Jesse's voice. He's mad at me? Feeling a surge of anger, I whirl around and glare at him. "If that's your idea of an apology, you suck at them."
He leans forward, his colorful tattooed forearms braced on his knees. "You think I owe you an apology? For what? Offering you my d*ck?"*

Now you get a picture of how lovely our hero is?
Yeap, I think you do...

As for the heroine, I cannot say she is my type of girl, either.

Her ex-boyfriend breaks up with her in a humiliating way and starts to date a very sexy woman in town, parading her in front of her. Our heroine, Bethany, stalks his social media and follows his life, all in the hopes of him getting his rocks off and coming back to her.

All because the d*ck-face said she was a woman to marry but he needed to live his life a little bit, this naive girl believes him and waits for him to get bored with his new girl-friend and come back to her so that they get married.

How much more stupid can you get?

I really DISLIKED the heroine at the beginning for her stupidity. "a doormat she is," I thought!

Bethany also sounds like too much of a prude at the beginning of the book, which also didn't sit well with me.

Bethany resists Jesse's flirting for a while, thinking he's a walking advertisement for an STD clinic and having sex with him would leave a girl feeling like a used Kleenex. She is also still caught up on her ex and she believes that she can have sex with only men she is in love with.

I know, I know, I'm crazy for not wanting to have sex with the Coast-to-Coast Casanova, right? Wrong! Being one of a million women isn't the same as being someone's one-in-a-million, no matter how amazing the sex would be.

Because I hated everything about the book, the characters and what's happening etc., I seriously considering dropping it and rating it with 1 star.

Just as I was considering to drop it, some funny dialogues started to appear. Those fun parts kept me going on. I went on reading it while I said to myself, "Let me see if I will change my mind about the book...".

We fall into a comfortable silence for a few seconds until I hear a sound coming from her lips. I peek over to see she's singing the words.

Singing is an overly generous description for the sound coming from her mouth though.

Holy shit... her voice is awful.

She not only butchers the song, singing notes that should only be used by parrots and dolphins, but she's fucking up the lyrics too.

"It doesn't make a difference if we're naked or not! We've got each other and that's —"

I pull off her headphones, and she jumps and whirls around. "What did you just say?"

"What are you doing? I told you to stop sneaking up on me!" she snaps.

"Did you just say, 'It doesn't make a difference if we're naked or not'? Those aren't the lyrics. 'If we make it or not.' Make it!"

"That's ridiculous. He's clearly saying naked."

Her brown eyes narrow. "Who made you the lyrics police anyway?" Her cheeks burn red, but she covers her embarrassment by stiffening her spine. "And last I checked, it wasn't a crime to sing."

"Ha! That? What you were just doing? That wasn't singing. That was an attempt to contact alien life."

Well, as I read on, I saw that in time, Jesse starts to grow on Bethany and Bethany starts to grow on Jesse, but this happens after %45 or so. It is safe to say that it's a slow burn.

But still, as Jesse realizes that he is attracted to Bethany, he says to himself that he doesn't understand how it is happening because normally he dates actresses, singers, models... all sexy and beautiful celebrities, not ordinary girls (his words, not mine!).

So he is still very charming as you see :)))!!!

After a while, we start to learn why Jesse is the way he is. Well, there is a classical “never shown love, never learnt how to love” story behind it. But at least, it explains it.

Jesse experiences a process where he learns "lust" is not "love" and love is not always feeling good/or feeling high.

A sickness twists my stomach. I put my back to the wall and slide down to my ass. I can't have her mad at me. In the past when things didn't work out in a relationship, I'd move on, no hard feelings, but I'm not ready to let Bethany go. And what the fuck is that all about? Love is supposed to feel good. Whatever it is that I feel for Bethany hurts like a motherfucker.

“You might want to consider redefining your definition of love.”

Doc Ulrich's words filter through my head. I retrace my history with woman, a train of faces and bodies that all blend together and not one of them memorable before Bethany. She's different.

No matter how attracted to each other they are, the world of the famous is not easy so when his ugly past makes an appearance, Bethany breaks up with him, losing her trust in him.

Yes, he has changed but she doesn't know that.

It takes a few months for Jesse to win back Bethany. And I think, I liked him for the very first time when they were separated and he felt miserable. I believed in his feelings then.

“It sounds like you're in love, and honestly, you couldn't pick a better woman. Bethany is great girl. She's a good human being.”

“But that's the thing! I didn't pick her. She crawled in like a virus and took over my central nervous system, killing me slowly by—”

He holds up his hand. “Please tell me you're not going to say that to her.”

I lean forward and cup my head. “I don't know what I'm going to say to her. Every time I'm around her, stupid shit comes out of my mouth. The woman has made me crazy.” “What do you know?”

I huff out a breath, completely exhausted. “I know that the idea of living without her makes me want to drown myself at the bottom of a whiskey bottle.”

“You know, for a guy who writes songs about love, you really suck at it.”

I groan. “I know. Thing is, the love I write about feels good. This shit?” I motion at my chest. “This does not.”

“That's because you don't have her yet.”

“What do I do?”

“That's easy. Get her back.”

And then, he goes on a mission to get her back and I liked this last part of the book.

“How did I get so lucky to be the one you give your heart to?”

My face gets hot and I struggle to hold her gaze. “That's the problem. I gave it to anyone who asked, but no one ever owned it until you. Now it's yours.”

Yeah, as you see, he gets yummy in the end :)

Writing:

Dual point of view. Talented writing. Makes you feel.

Safety:

The hero is one of the biggest man-wh*res ever but he doesn't touch any other woman after meeting Bethany, so there's that.

Recommendation:

This is a fun & light read so you can read it or not, no big deal.

If you think you can get over his nastiness and her half-wittedness at the beginning, their story gets better eventually and you can enjoy it later on.

I can just say that I don't regret reading it and I am glad I didn't drop it when I was really furious because the book took my steam off later in a heart-warming way.

P.S. One of the side characters, the new drummer of the rock band, Ryder, was an awesome guy and if there is going to be a book about this man, I will definitely read it.

Samantha I Love HEA Romance Book Blog says

HOLY HOTCAKES!!!!!! This book just blew me away! Everything about this book is perfection. I can not fault it. Playing By Heart is a slow burning, heartfelt romance that captivated me from the get go and I could not put it down, not that I tried. I absolutely loved this story! It is definitely one of my favourite books this year!

Bethany is such a strong heroine, I loved her so much! She comes across as so straight laced but deep down she has a fire that burns hot. I loved how she put Jesse in his place a lot. Her character felt so real and relatable.

Jesse is a super famous rock star, that has fallen from grace. He is in for a shock with the events that are set in motion during this book. HE is so used to having everything handed to him, it made me love Bethany's reactions to him even more. Jesse may not be the best company at the very start of the book but by then end I was swooning over him. GAH, he is so freaking sweet!!!

This couple burned hot, they were compatible in more ways than one and were definitely made, well written,

for each other. I really love them together. This book gave me every emotion, anger, sadness, happiness. It made my heart fly, gave me butterflies, the whole package. The author has written this book with so much passion. I can feel every word, every feeling and it made it such an enjoyable read. This is definitely a story for my shelf! I can still feel it in my heart. I highly recommend this slow burning rock star romance. This book is definitely a top read for me this year and I can not wait to read more from this phenomenal author!

AJ says

4.5 stars!

I love this book! An enemies-to-lovers rock star romance with great banter and chemistry, and a gorgeous love story that is sweet, sexy, and beautifully heartfelt. J.B. Salsbury has delivered another fantastic read that is lots of fun, with imperfect characters that you cannot help but love, and all the feels!

Jesse Lee is the quintessential bad boy rock star – tattooed, foul-mouthed, spoiled, entitled and drowning in drugs, alcohol and women. His latest bender is the last straw for his band and his label, and he is shipped off to Arizona to stay with his estranged brother in order to straighten himself out and get writing again in a last-ditch effort to save his career.

Bethany is a good girl who has recently had her heart broken and is struggling to move on. She works for her church's pastor as a nanny for his adorable four year old, and the last thing she was expecting, or wanting, was to have to deal with an angry, broody, broken rock star staying in her boss's house.

The circumstances of their first meeting are awkward, and it all goes downhill from there. Jesse, resenting everything about his stay in Arizona, dismisses Bethany as plain, boring and no fun, and Bethany has no time for such a rude, crude and angry man, no matter how gorgeous he is or how many records he has sold. The snark and banter is highly entertaining as they bicker and antagonise each other, but there's also a reluctant attraction there, creating a fantastic dynamic that is so much fun to watch.

*I never allow people to get under my skin, and it's been pretty fucking easy since adolescence.
The less I care, the easier it is.
So how the fuck does this no-name girl manage to irritate the shit out of me?*

Jesse obviously has issues, though he is reluctant to deal with them, wanting nothing more than to get back to his life of excess back in LA. But sobriety and his new circumstances change him, and Bethany is a big part of that, not taking his crap, and treating him like a real person instead of bowing down to his every whim like everybody else in his life. She truly sees him, and he begins to soften towards her, truly seeing her as well, and that's when everything begins to change.

I love this love story! It's a slow burn as these two opposites find their common ground, and they are surprisingly and beautifully natural with each other. And watching foul-mouthed Jesse tease and poke at prudish Bethany is so funny! I laughed out loud at his lack of filter, and watching them together is so much fun. The sexy time is passionate and intense, and the emotion between them is gorgeous, and I was easily swept up into their romance.

"Say you're mine."

Please, just tell me you'll be mine."

But Jesse is still figuring himself out, Bethany is dealing with things from her past, and their everyday lives couldn't be more different from each other. They have a lot to sort through and it's a rollercoaster of emotion as they do it, but I loved watching them deal with it all and find their way forward, with more than one epic moment along the way.

This is a fantastically fun read that kept me glued to my kindle. I read it in a day, unable to put it down, and I fell in love with these characters and their story.

"You have me now. You've owned me from the start. There's no playbook on how to love you, so I'll keep playing by heart."

It is a standalone, but Salsbury fans will love the loose tie-in to the *Fighting* series, and I'm keeping my fingers crossed for a follow up book for Bethany's best friend, who is an absolute riot!

Such a great read, I loved it! 4.5 stars.

An Advanced Review Copy was generously provided by the author in exchange for an honest review.

Astrid - The Bookish Sweet Tooth says

READ MY REVIEW ON THE BLOG

I'm a huge fan of J.B. Salsbury. She always gives well-used tropes a new spin and makes them fresh again. In *PLAYING BY HEART* we meet a rockstar who took the "sex, drugs and rock'n'roll" motto a little too literally and the average small-town girl, who upon the second look isn't all that average anymore.

For superstar Jesse's record company and his manager his most recent PR nightmare is the last straw. Dave forces Jesse to stay with his brother, to detox and get counselling to help him fight his demons. Ninety days of staying with his pastor-brother in the boonies of Arizona, no drugs, no phone, no car, no women. A nightmare because the drugs made him numb and put the monster in him to rest.

Jesse's treatment of people reflects his self-destructive path. He is crass, rude, sometimes even vicious but this plain girl who looks after his brother's daughter, doesn't let him get away with it. He loves to yank peoples' chains and has no filter whatsoever. The things that come out of his mouth are oftentimes obnoxious, arrogant and hurtful.

“You’re not a good person.”

He shrugs. **“I know. But when I’m with you”**—his expression sobers—**“I’m hopeful that one day I could be.”**

Bethany has had her own share of drama in her life. Her boyfriend broke up with her and had a new woman in his life only a short time later. Unfortunately she can't let it go and shows some stalker-ish behavior I found a little creepy. Bethany checked her ex-boyfriend's Instagram account a couple of times a day for hints that things weren't going well with his new girlfriend. When she meets her boss's famous brother she's probably the only woman not worshipping at the Altar of Jesse. Bethany wasn't a pushover (at least not where Jesse was concerned) and she stopped being creepy and started behaving like a normal person, thank God, because for a while her behavior worried me.

With a topic like addiction you expect some heaviness in the storyline which wasn't the case in PLAYING BY HEART. It has some emotional moments but it was mostly fun. Even when Jesse was crass and rude he provided for some comic relief.

“Ha! That? What you were just doing? That wasn’t singing. That was an attempt to contact alien life.”

Unfortunately I wasn't completely sold on the main characters. It wasn't that I didn't like them, I did, I just didn't love them for most of the book and this is where the story fell a little flat for me. I have to admit, though, that the ending totally reeled me in, hook, line and sinker. I LOVED Jesse and Bethany in the last 15% - the author really cranked up the emotions and I finally fell in love with them.

“This woman drives me insane, and I don’t know whether to run like hell and get as far away as I can or drop to her feet and beg her to continue to punish me.”

This isn't my favorite book by J.B. Salsbury but I did enjoy the story. I read through it rather fast, which is always a sign that it kept me engaged. Before you make up your mind read more reviews - as always this is my opinion and we all have different experiences when we read. Now, while this wasn't a five-star book I definitely want to read Jesse's brother Ben's story!

“I, Jesiah Andrew Langley, have belonged to you since you butchered AC/DC. From that moment on, it’s only been you.”

Bookgasms Book Blog says

Playing by Heart combines two tropes that are very hit-or-miss for me: enemies-to-lovers and rockstar romance. So, I took a minute before deciding that I couldn't miss out on the opportunity to revisit J.B. Salsbury's writing and, frankly, she had me at *"Whatsherface..."*

And?

I'm *so* glad I went for it! Y'all this book just *feels good*. I mean, don't get me wrong, there's a fair amount of angst and some moments where I wanted to knock some sense into both Jesse and Bethany, but I smiled my face off for the vast majority of this story - and I never wanted to put it down.

This is indeed a true "enemies-to-lovers" storyline, but I feel like Ms. Salsbury got the chemistry just exactly right. It's antagonistic, but always with this sparky, sexy undertone that makes it feel a bit like foreplay. It's never overtly *mean*. There's always a playful undercurrent and the recognition that there's a connection forming, even if the characters themselves don't always want to acknowledge it.

The story also dives a little deeper than the average manwhore rockstar meets good girl plain jane. Both Jesse and Bethany have some healing and growing to do, and I feel like there was adequate space given in the storyline to allow that to happen. I loved their character arcs. I loved the role they played in each others growth/healing. And I *loved* the depth this gave to their story.

In all? This was an easy, compelling, and completely satisfying read. I was sucked in immediately and had trouble putting it down to deal with my pesky real world obligations. It just *felt good* to read and the ending left me with an epic book high. I am so glad I took a chance on this story, and cannot recommend it highly enough! ~ Shelly, 5 Stars

Betul says

ARC provided by author in exchange for an honest review

"Being one of a million women isn't the same as being someone's one-in-a-million, no matter how amazing the sex would be."

I am usually not a big fan of enemies-to-lovers or books about musicians. However, I am a big fan of this author, so you know I had to read this book. Right from the start I was hooked to the story and loved how much fun it was. This book is about Jesse Lee, an arrogant/cocky bad boy rockstar, who has again hit rock bottom. His manager and label company had enough and it is time for some major changes in his life, if he wants to continue being a star. I have to admit I didn't like him in the beginning, he was very entitled and rude. Bethany is the exact opposite. She is very nice and sweet, and is a bit naive in some aspects. They say opposites attract, they definitely did in this book, but it really took some time to get to that point. I enjoyed their banter a lot, and I was happy to see that Bethany could hold her own with Jesse.

"You have me now. You've owned me from the start. There's no playbook on how to love you, so I'll keep playing by heart."

Playing by Heart was a very fun and light contemporary romance. I was happy that Jesse's rockstar status and career weren't in the forefront the entire book. The author took her time for the characters to hate, and eventually love each other. The characters also grew as individuals and healed from past hurts. There was no dull moment in this book, and I loved how the story developed. I also enjoyed all the side-characters, and I wouldn't mind some of them getting their own stories. I especially loved Bethany's best-friend/roommate

Ashleigh, she was loyal and crazy to a fault. I highly recommend this book to any romance reader. Definitely pick this book up if you are in need of a funny and sexy romance.

Kahea says

4.5 Stars

Rockstar romance coupled with an enemies to lovers trope?

Yeah. Not going to deny that I jumped at the chance to get my greedy hands on this baby and to say I got totally sucked into Beth and Jessie's tumultuous story is an understatement BUT what was also all kinds of real was how much my eyes (from all the rolling they did) and head ached because of these two.

They tested me. They did. But in the end, the pain was so worth it.

So, Jessie and Bethany...I ended up adoring them...but it took a minute to get there because they both needed to grow and boy, was it a trial. I actually wanted to gut Jessie with a spoon when I first met him...like, literally when I FIRST met him. And Beth...I honestly liked her, because she is a seriously good and sweet person. but the need to reach into my Kindle and Gibbs smack some sense into her was STRONG. But once they collided, well that's when things got really interesting all around.

Now, I could spoil things for you, but I won't...well, at least not intentionally. But from the moment Jessie and Beth collided things took a turn for the better. They did even though this was all kinds of slow burn for them. And though the antagonism was high, they flowed. They had that indescribable "it" factor thing going on that had me wanting them to get their shit sorted out, which took a minute as well, so they could be together despite how bat shit crazy they drove me. And though I'm still waffling over how I feel about that situation that dropped the sword of Damocles on their heads, I cannot deny that the "groveling" was epic!

Now. I totally enjoyed this book, but I gotta be honest and say that the path that was taken surprised me. It is a tragically beautiful story of forgiveness, redemption and truly understanding what love is and how it can tear you to pieces even as it's sewing you back together again. And as for the supporting cast of characters, which you all know I have a weakness for...let's just say that I'm crossing my toes that Ben and Ryder get their own books at some point down the road cause they are kind of everything.

~ Copy provided by the author & voluntarily reviewed ~

Anne OK says

Full review posted 12/27/18

Playing by Heart is a mix of rock star and enemies-to-lovers romance between a famous rock star and a small town plain jane who will rock his world in the end. Theirs is a riveting journey between opposites that is bursting with combustible attraction, full of emotions with angsty push and pull, and the redemption and healing that brings a tear or two without being over-dramatic.

Jesse Lee Langley is a bad-bad-boy rock star and a maddeningly obstinate player! He has no one but himself

to blame for his career's downfall by choosing a hedonistic escape into sex, drugs and rock-n-roll taken to the Nth degree. He isn't the easiest person to love or even like! I spent most of the book stressed out, angry and challenged by him. I had almost reached the point of no return. And then it happened -- lightning struck the bad boy rocker. I didn't think he could ever change-- but he miraculously took a 180, and he had a new fan.

The author never allows Jesse or readers to forget that the message of substance abuse is real and important to this storyline. Although there was light at the end of the tunnel for him, the road to Jesse's recovery was fraught with contention and challenges. Never assume there are shortcuts. No one has a definite map. And the journey requires constant and unflagging commitment.

Bethany Parks has problems of her own to solve. Only a few people know the secrets she's keeping -- and Jesse isn't one of them. She's hiding her mistakes behind a case of heartbreak, and that doesn't allow her to trust easily. I was thrilled to watch this quirky and naïve girl throw attitude towards the rock star, stepping forward to hold her own against his dominating personality. The "ugly duckling" turned into a beautiful swan and held Jesse's heart in her hands before he knew what had hit him. And I don't think it was her singing! But that's another delightful funny to experience for yourself.

Along with unforgettable main characters, I love how the author creates secondary characters that are a valuable part of the story. The importance of friends and relatives is often lost in books. Here you'll be rewarded with secondary characters who are so well-drawn adding another level of enjoyment to this story. Ben is a minister, single dad raising an adorable four-year old daughter named Elliot -- and he's also Jesse's estranged older brother. We don't get enough of Ben's backstory here, and I definitely am intrigued enough to beg the author to consider giving us more. And what would make it even better is perhaps if Ashleigh, Bethany's off-the-charts man-crazy best friend, could play a big part in seeing to it that Ben and Elliot get a fabulous happy-ever-after and in return Ashleigh, as well. That girl has a thang for the man of God -- especially when he's wearing sweatpants.

The book isn't all gloom and doom. There's a perfect balance of angst, witty banter and humor and love between all the characters. Overall, I found it to be a total package of every feel that make-up a satisfying slow-burn sexy romance that included some of the funniest foreplay lingo ever, while also carrying a compelling message-wise tone.

I have only one small complaint regarding too many easily fixable editing errors. I always hate to see these silly mistakes that plague an otherwise solid and enticing book. If only a final solid line by line proof had been done . . .

I recommend Jesse and Bethany's story. Salsbury puts her own unique spin on a well-used trope, resulting in a truly satisfying outcome.

Cali Gals says

OMG this book is AMAZING! To be honest, you had me at Rockstar Romance. Having said that, this is unique and touching. Jesse is our rockstar that has spiraled out of control. Bethany is a sweet church girl who also happens to be the nanny for Jesse's niece. When these two worlds collide, holy heck, Bethany is not impressed and Jesse has a bit of a rude awakening. Add the zanny crew from both of these characters camps, well plan for a crazy story. I was surprised by its journey. I went in assuming some predictability with the storyline. Yes, I am obsessed and frequently delve into Rockstar reads. I was wrong. You know what they say about making assumptions. It definitely applies here. Jesse and Bethany both have secrets to tell. As all unfolds, beauty is revealed. I fall in love with all the players and my heart breaks as I experience their wounds from the past. This is a must read in my opinion. Side note: I definitely hope Jesse's brother and Bethany's best friend get there own story (wink). Happy Reading!
