



# Love at First Hate

*J.L. Merrow*

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*First impressions can doom second chances.*

Bran Roscarrock has been living in the closet all his life. As heir to an expansive family legacy in the town of Porthkennack, old-fashioned ideals of respectability and duty were drummed into him since childhood, and he's never dared to live—or love—openly.

Sam Ferreira, an old friend of Bran's brother, Jory, is a disgraced academic desperate to leave his dead-end job. When Jory asks him to take over as curator of a planned exhibition on Edward of Woodstock, the fourteenth-century Black Prince, Sam leaps at the chance to do what he loves and make a fresh start.

But Bran's funding the exhibition, and though sparks fly between the two men, they're not all happy ones. Bran idolises Prince Edward as a hero, while Sam's determined to present a balanced picture. With neither of them prepared to give ground, a hundred years of war seems all too possible. And if Bran finds out about Sam's past, his future may not be bright, and their budding romance may be lost to history.

## Love at First Hate Details

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Author : J.L. Merrow

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## From Reader Review Love at First Hate for online ebook

### Aerin says

I really liked this series a whole lot, and I knew this next book was Bran's book and I got ridiculously excited. Bran was a complete asshole each and every time he made an appearance in the books in this series, and I love the redeeming story of a flawed character!

Alas, I was so disappointed after finishing this book, it took me a long time to find enough energy to write a review for it. There are so many things I was bummed about! Like the lack of passion and chemistry between Sam and Bran! You can tell me all you want that they're crazy attracted to each other, if I don't feel it, it's all stories.

And if I had to hear ONE MORE DAMN TIME about the Black Prince.....UGH!!! I swear I thought multiple times that the Black Prince is exactly who Bran was infatuated with and who he'd like to hump into the bed. I'm ok with some history, but this was annoying as hell!

Unfortunately, this was my least favorite book in this series, that's all.

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### Barb ~rede-2-read~ says

Another visit to Porthkennack on the Cornwall coast in England, this time guided by the inimitable style of JL Mero, who not only lends British authenticity to the tale, but who has a wonderful, understated sense of humor that creates multiple moments of quiet laughter throughout the story. Number eleven in this series that's written by various British authors, this is one of three that focus on the Roscarrock family—founding members of the community, complete with the snobbery that goes with the bragging rights.

Bran is the patriarch, a man in his thirties, of diminutive stature, who's lived in the closet all his adult life. His father drilled responsibility and the ideals of duty to their legacy into him since childhood, and though he is a twin, his sister knew it would be Bran who took over the estate when their father passed on. Now he's got a reputation the community of being tight-fisted, uncaring, and uninterested in the working man. He's creating an exhibition—a tribute to Edward of Woodstock, the Black Prince—and he's doing it to bring attention to the town, but he's also doing it to pay homage to his hero, and he's a bit prejudiced in that regard.

Sam Ferreira holds a doctoral degree and has curator experience and is the first person Bran's brother Jory (One Under) thinks of when Bran is attacked and hospitalized and needs someone to take over the exhibition. Sam jumps at the chance, after assuring that Jory knows about the disgrace he suffered at his university post which resulted in him being fired. He's doing a great job with the exhibit and is removing that slight prejudice that seems to make the Black Prince look like a hero, when Bran is released from the hospital and finds out what Sam is up to. And then the sparks fly.

A great enemies-to-lovers story, this truly was first hate before the two decided to compromise and get to know one another. After that, the sparks were flying for a different reason, and it looked like Bran might finally decide that the closet is too small to live in. Of course, that's when he finds out what happened at Sam's previous job and creates such a ruckus about it that Sam flees both the job and their budding relationship.

JL Merrow wrote the first book in this series, *Wake Up Call*, and though I know this is not the last, this is certainly one of the best. The whole series is terrific, but these tales of the Roscarrock family have been among my favorites. Now I'm hoping we'll get one about the illegitimate son of the family, Devon Thompson, the boy that Bran's twin, Bea, gave birth to and who was turned away, rejected and dejected, when he found out who his mother is. That would be top of my must-buy list. In any event, in a roundabout way, I'm trying to say that I highly recommend this series, and most definitely this story. Yes, it can be read as a standalone but I think that at least reading *One Under* would make this more meaningful.

ARC provided by the publisher through Net Galley in exchange for an impartial review.

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## **Joyfully Jay says**

*A Joyfully Jay review.*

### ***4 stars***

First, I must applaud this author for taking a real bastard of a character such as Bran and actually making him into someone who one can actually pity and eventually feel kindness toward. In the previous two novels, Bran is presented as a hard, cold individual and we get little to no background on why he is the way he is other than that he was the heir apparent and molded into a formidable likeness of his own hard-hearted father. Through a series of flashbacks, we begin to see just who Bran really is—a man that hides fear and self-doubt behind a veneer of snobbish disdain. As the story progresses, we see a different side of Bran emerge all due to Sam, who himself is riddled with anxiety over his gambling debts and avoiding repeating his lousy record of trusting and falling for men who use him pitifully. Sam is everything Bran is not—light to Bran's darkness. Their animosity turns to heated attraction, but Sam is no fool and will not repeat the disastrous mistakes he made with his former lover. Bran is therefore faced with a huge decision—one that will expose him to possible derision and scorn from the very community he has fought to maintain a rigid control over his entire life.

**Read Sammy's review in its entirety [here](#).**

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## **Ruthie Taylor says**

~~I received a free copy of this book to read and review for Wicked Reads ~~

This is the 11th book in the series, and whilst I would definitely recommend that you read them all, and in order, I think that this is a good read in its own right.

A rather dramatic start to this book which results in Bran ending up in hospital. And not just the once ... which ensures he is even more grouchy than usual.

Sam has been given a second chance at a career, curating an exhibition about the Black Prince ... which

means working with the main funder, Bran Roscarrock. He is a man who not only has very fixed views on the Black Prince, but is also so deep in the closet that Sam has no idea how to connect with him ... even though he is convinced that there could be something between them.

As they both come clean about their secrets from the past, we get to learn about the reasons behind some of their hang ups. And there are some big issues which they both have to face and resolve in order to be ready to move forward. I really enjoyed how they addressed their past to be ready for the future.

We also get to meet some of the leads from previous books, so faithful readers will be happy to catch up with them too.

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## **CrabbyPatty says**

We first met Bran at the beginning of this series and the wealthy Roscarrock family has been an integral part of life in the small Cornish village of Porthkennack. Bran's story is told against the backdrop of an exhibit being prepared for his personal hero, Edward of Woodstock, also known as the Black Prince (the eldest son of Edward III). Like Bran, Edward faced a huge amount of responsibility at a young age and often had to make decisions that didn't exactly endear him to others. Sam Ferreira is hired to curate this exhibit and butts heads with Bran when he attempts to present a more balanced perspective.

I enjoyed the slower pace of this story as the plot flashes back to Bran's childhood and his relationship with his twin sister, distant and demanding father and sickly mother. It takes a while, but Bran himself slowly emerges from the facade of formality and arrogance that he uses to distance himself from his emotions and memories. And Sam, with his own issues and secrets, bit by bit finds a way into Bran's heart and their gentle chemistry is not so much sizzle, but rather satisfaction and completeness.

There is conflict and miscommunication, but Bran and Sam are two mature adults who find their way through their issues with a minimum of angst. The ending pulls everything together nicely and I left the book feeling this story was a nice addition to the Porthkennack series. 4 stars.

*I received an ARC from Riptide Publishing, via NetGalley, in exchange for an honest review.*

Review also posted at Gay Book Reviews - check it out!

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## **Fabi says**

Another Porthkennack installment! I am strangely addicted to this series. I think it's the foreign flavor that the authentic Cornwall setting brings to these stories. The language, the accent, the climate and terrain all come together to give the reader a realistic travel experience.

You don't really have to read these books in order, but I think you'll get more out of this particular one if you read at least the previous J.L. Merrow ones. This story continues to follow the Roscarrocks introduced in book 1.

It's a compelling story portraying the life of the current head of the family. Heir to the name and customs as

well as the family's industries, Bran was groomed from an early age to eventually assume the reins. We get pieces of his childhood in brief flashbacks throughout the book. I don't generally enjoy flashbacks, but in this story they were necessary to convey the emotion and tension of those past instances that made Bran into the man he is today.

We don't get quite as personal a look into Sam's background. It's revealed as conversations among the characters. We get to enjoy mentions and scenes with previous characters from this series.

The romance aspect was understated. It mostly served to allow both MCs to overcome their pasts and find the courage to face their future.

If you follow this series, this is a must read as it brings many previously unknown secrets to the surface.

3.5 stars!

*Review ARC graciously provided by the publisher via NetGalley*

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### **Roberta Blablanski says**

\*\*\*ARC provided via NetGalley in exchange for honest and impartial review.\*\*\*

Love at First Hate is set in the Porthkennack universe and features some of the characters from the previous books. However, it isn't necessary to read the previous books to fully enjoy this installment. I've read a few others, not in order, and I wasn't lost at any part of the book.

This is the slowest of slow burns. It took until about two thirds of the way before the characters kiss. I loved the build up to that moment. The book kept me riveted and not just for the potential love connection. The author delves into Bran's complicated family history and ties into the exhibition of the Black Prince (an ancestor) that he is funding. Sam has his own troublesome history that he's trying to work through and get past. .

While I enjoyed the history lessons interwoven into the story and the development of the characters, I was disappointed with the resolution of one of the points of conflict. I believe the author intended to use this as an example of the character's evolution, but it was far from a reality I could easily accept. This particular event left me perplexed.

Overall, I really liked all facets of the story and the characters.

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### **Maureen Lubitz says**

Love at First Hate is a contemporary m/m romance novel by J.L. Merrow. I prefer historical romance to contemporary, but the premise sounded interesting, so I decided to give it a try.

Sam Ferreira arrives in the small town of Porthkennack to help with an exhibition on Edward of Woodstock. He got the job because his friend Jory recommended him, and Sam sees this as the perfect opportunity for a fresh start. Sam clashes almost immediately with Jory's older brother Bran, who is sponsoring the exhibition.

Their personalities are wildly different, as are their opinions on historical scholarship. Eventually, the acrimony fades and grows into something different, but can this budding relationship withstand secrets from the past?

This is definitely a slow burn book. It takes quite a bit of time for the two heroes to even meet, let alone get together. And then it seems like they have very little time together before they are separated by circumstances. Merrow also splits the narrative between the present day and flashbacks, the latter of which provides the reader with a great deal of insight into the development of Bran's personality and why he's so reserved and repressed.

I did not know when I made the request that the Porthkennack books are a loose series with both contemporary and historical entries by several different authors. I also did not know that Bran was the "villain of the piece" in another of Merrow's books. I wish I had known this because I love a good redemption story.

I would recommend Love at First Hate. I did not feel at too much of a disadvantage because the worldbuilding is very thorough- almost at the expense of the romantic pairing. I would have also liked more clashing between Sam and Bran, as well as more time for them together before the conflict. That said, my interest is piqued, and I am looking forward to checking out Merrow's other books- including the earlier Porthkennack book- as well as the other books in this series.

I voluntarily read and reviewed an advanced copy of this book.

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## **Ulysses Dietz says**

Love at First Hate  
By J.L. Merrow  
Riptide Publishing, 2018  
Five stars

Set once more in the fictitious Cornish town of Porthkennack, it is in this appealing series-within-a-series that J.L. Merrow focuses on the Roscarrock family and their sometimes-stormy relationship with the town itself. All of the authors who have taken on the Porthkennack setting for their books use its history and quirky Cornish culture as the framework for their narratives. Merrow zeroes in on issues of class and race in a modern UK.

It was fated that this would be my favorite of this series so far: it has a great old house, a museum, and a gay curator – all things that are central motifs in my own writing. Amazingly, Merrow actually gets the curatorial part right, something most novelists and screenwriters never do. Well done.

Branok Roscarrock has only figured lightly in previous novels in this series, and not in a good way. Literally the lord of the manor, Bran is seen as gruff, arrogant and lacking in compassion by the townsfolk. Having successfully maintained the family fortunes, he is not widely liked. His twin sister Bea hasn't fared much better. In "Love at First Hate" we finally learn the full backstory to the Roscarrock twins.

Alessandro (Sam) Ferreira is a great character. A PhD in history, he is from a long line of Indian Catholics from the island of Goa – a Portuguese colony dating back centuries. He represents exactly the kind of British

citizen that Bran Roscarrock's father disdained: the non-white, non-Anglican child of immigrants. We even get a glimpse at the profound cultural sensitivity to accents that defines the tenacious British class system:

“His accent was southern English, working class, although educated.”

Lord knows, Americans set a great store by accents, but nowhere near the way that speech patterns mark people in the UK, even in these modern, diversified times.

Sam gets called in as a last-minute curator for a new local history center by his friend Jory – who happens to be both gay and Bran Roscarrock's brother. Jory's adolescent son Gawen is the heir apparent to the Roscarrock legacy (Jory's story was the subject of a previous book in this series). Gawen's close relationship with his uncle Bran is the first indication that Bran is something better than we have been led to believe. As it transpires, it is Bran's foundation that is funding the new museum, and Bran's own passion for English history that inspired it in the first place.

His first meeting with Sam Ferreira is explosive – the aristocrat's view of history versus the immigrant's (and, to be honest, the modern curator's mandate to present history in a balanced and thoughtful fashion in spite of pressure from rich patrons – which is one of the things Merrow gets so right). Bran's immediate love/hate response to Sam has its own fraught roots in Bran and Bea Roscarrock's upbringing and unhappy adolescence. It is a classic romantic set-up that Merrow manages very neatly, mixed in with anxieties around class and race and sexuality.

Merrow writes marvelous characters. She digs under the surface to find the best of human nature that society has done its best to suppress. There is a good bit of Jane Austen in these Porthkennack stories, but reflecting a world that Austen herself could never have imagined.

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~Mindy Lynn~ says

*I was given an ARC by the publisher and Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.*

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**Trio says**

I've enjoyed every one of the Porthkennack stories, and the differences between them all is a large part of the draw. In *Love at First Hate* Merrow pulls out an excellent friends to lovers tale by making the animosity between the main characters just as believable as their eventual romantic connection.

The pacing is slow, but I couldn't put it down and found myself craving to know more about the *story* than the romance, which I've gotta say, J.L. Merrow crafts a good one here. These men are both in their thirties and have the baggage to prove it, plus they both are immersed in their lives and there is so much more going on than just boy meets boy.

A very well written, creative, and addictive read.

*this book was provided to me by NetGalley for the purpose of my review*

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~☆~Danni(ela) ♥ ?? love & semi-colons~☆~ says

~3.5~

In *Love at First Hate*, Merrow continues the story of the Roscarrock family, which began in *Wake Up Call*, the first book of the *Porthkennack* series.

I didn't connect the dots initially, but Bran is Devan's uncle, and he was positively cruel to Dev when Dev came looking for his birth mother. In this book, we find out why.

The story has several moody flashback scenes that explain Bran's rigid personality, his unwillingness to consider other points of view, his personal sense of shame.

Bran's father was not an easy man, and he always made Bran feel like he wasn't good enough. Bran found a hero in Edward the Black Prince, and he'll be damned if anybody paints the prince in a bad light.

Sam, a good friend of Jory's (Bran's brother and one of the MCs in book nine, *One Under*), is drowning in gambling debt and wasting his life working at a pub. Once a historian and academic, Sam was fired for a sin that wasn't entirely of his own making.

When Jory offers Sam a job as head curator of an exhibition on Edward the Black Prince, Sam readily agrees. But Sam wants the exhibition to feel balanced and portray the prince as both a hero and a villain. Bran isn't fond of Sam's opinions, and the two butt heads almost immediately.

At the beginning of the book, Bran is attacked. He doesn't remember the attack; who attacked him and why remains a mystery until the end. Likewise, why Sam lost his job isn't explained until the end. Unfortunately, Bran finds out before Sam can come clean and accuses Sam of being a liar and cheater.

**This book worked on many levels, but the romance was quite understated and muted. I didn't feel the connection between the men.** I've recently complained about books including gratuitous sex as plot filler. *Love at First Hate* has the opposite problem: it oozes plot but lacks passion. There's a brief on-page sex scene at around 70 percent; the second one fades to black (one sentence, and it's over).

I liked the slow burn, but there was never a moment where I thought, Wow, these guys are hot for each other. **The romance flailed on an emotional level too; the book ends with a HFN (no words of love are exchanged).**

I want to add that **this book doesn't work well as a standalone.** There are many references to Merrow's previous books in this series, and Jory and Mal from *One Under* play a fairly big role as secondary characters.

This was a quick read for me. I enjoyed the writing, the setting, and the deft portrayal of the complicated relationship between Bran and his twin sister, Bea. I'd argue, however, that Bran's relationship with Bea, and even his nephew (Jory's son), was far more interesting than his relationship with Sam.

***Love at First Hate* gets 4+ stars for character development, atmosphere, and mystery. The lackluster romance gets 2.5 stars.**

## Veronica says

I received a free copy of this book to read and review for Wicked Reads.

Love at First Hate is the 11th book in the Porthkennack series but it can be read as a stand alone and it is the first one in this series for me. I chose it based entirely on the author, JL Merrow whose work I've read before.

This is a slow-moving story. A lot of time is spent learning about Bran and Sam's lives in the here and now before they meet, as well as finding out about Bran's past, his family, growing up and his first crush. I didn't mind that it took a long time before Bran and Sam actually met because I felt like I knew them. Sam was easy to like. He is down to earth, imperfect and charming. The slower pace gave me time to warm up to Bran who I was finding difficult to like but as the story progressed I enjoyed watching him learn to see himself and his life a little differently.

While it takes a long time for these two to meet, once they do it doesn't take long before romantic feelings develop. I enjoyed seeing Sam and Bran clash, retreat to their own corners and come together again. It was interesting and a bit fun.

One of my favourite things about reading a book by JL Merrow is the way her writing includes British mannerisms, language, behaviour and politeness. It brings more life to the story, and here we got some British history too. I liked learning about the Black Prince as Sam and Bran worked on the exhibition.

Love at First Hate was a good story and by the end seeing the men happy made me happy too even if it took a while to get there. 3 stars.

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## Lyra says

So, here we are in the third of the "really are truly connected and not just set in the same town" books of the Porthkennack series! You need to have read book number one Wake Up Call and book number 9 One Under for this book to really go well.

First off, this book is kind of getting the side eye from me for pulling a "everyone is gay" on us. I mean, come on. Is there something in the water? We've got two brothers and a nephew, all of whom just happen to be gay. I'm willing to let the peripherals (friends and/or friends how end up becoming significant others) go, because that's a matter of association, but here we have a family who is having basically mostly gay children for some reason. Okay. Sure. We'll just let that pass.

Anyway, when I found out that this book was about Bran because Bran, too, was gay (see above, see above, see above), I was wondering how in heaven's name Merrow was going to redeem Bran because, well, Bran was an asshole previously. Like, really bad.

And one of the interesting things that this got me thinking about was how was it's bad to have systems set up that depend on people in positions of power not being abusive or bad or whatever because even if the people in positions of power *usually* aren't abusive or bad or whatever, they still go through shitty times where they

aren't doing what they should. If a person in power goes through a shitty time at the same time that a person without power goes through a shitty time, well, guess who gets the short end of the stick? Everyone goes through bad times. That's just the way of it. We need to have systems set up to understand that.

I liked a lot of the things that went on in the book, like how people got stubborn and irrational and questioned their motivations and weren't sure why they had done what they had done. That was nice.

I also really liked that we got to see some more of what went on with Bea from a more sympathetic perspective; when I was young, adoption was portrayed to us as this uniformly loving, wonderful, gift that you could give, and I didn't realize until much later that whatever positives go with adoption, it is often also an incredible trauma. Not recognizing what goes along with it causes all kinds of problems when people get involved with it and all of a sudden all these issues they didn't anticipate arise.

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## **Sandra says**

While this is the 11th book in the loosely connected Porthkennack series, it's book 3 for the Roscarrocks; this one being about Branok (Bran) who was a real git in the first two books, and whom I'd basically written off as a jerk not worth my time.

Boy, was I wrong.

It could theoretically also be read as a standalone, though the characters from the previous two books make an appearance, and it would probably be best to read both of them before reading this one, to fully grasp the layers of Bran's misunderstood character.

Bran was a real a-hole to his nephew Devan (from book 1) when he came to Porthkennack to search for his birth mother, though it's not clear why until this book.

Bran showed some contempt for his little brother Jory (from book 2), and again, the reasons aren't clear until this book.

Living with a huge burden on his shoulders, his late father's voice in his ear, Bran has locked himself into the closet all his life, never feeling free to be who he really is. His twin sister Bea (Devan's mother) and he have spent most their adult life on their family estate, setting themselves apart from the general populace as what would 500 years ago be similar to feudal overlords.

And Bran has for many, many years kept a massive secret from his sister and brother.

Sam Ferreira is an old friend of Jory, whom he met while at university. Trusting someone he thought he could trust turned out to be detrimental for Sam's academic career, and, in some debt from gambling, he's now in dire need of a new job. When Jory comes to him about helping with an exhibit Bran is funding, about The Black Prince, Sam jumps at the chance to prove himself and says yes.

And thus Bran and Sam meet. The romance between them is slow burn by design - and when I say slow, I mean sloooooooooow. There's a lot of UST and longing, but we're more than halfway in before they first kiss. To be honest, the slow burn was necessary - both men have baggage, and it takes some time for Bran and Sam to trust the other.

The romance is quiet, almost taking a backseat to the rest of the plot, which is basically an exploration, a

study of Bran's character. The man, outwardly sensible and hard and difficult to read, is in reality vulnerable, insecure, and scared. He hides his true self. He's taken on the responsibility of carrying the family legacy. He's jealous, he's demanding, and he barks at others. But he puts family above all else, he's generous, and he desperately wants to be loved. Even if he's loathe to admit that to anyone, including himself.

I'm not one who needs a lot of on-page sex, and this book doesn't have a lot of it, which suited me fine. What passion there is felt genuine. We leave Bran and Sam with a HFN, but one that I can absolutely see turn into a HEA, possibly in a future book in which we get to revisit these characters.

\*\* I received a free copy of this book from its publisher via Netgalley in exchange for an honest review. \*\*

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