

The background features a complex network of white nodes and connecting lines, resembling a constellation or a data network. The nodes are of varying sizes and are connected by thin white lines, creating a web-like structure. The background color transitions from a deep purple at the top to a bright pink at the bottom. The title 'The Binding' is centered in the upper half of the image.

The Binding

Written by Bridget Collins

Published by sanmarco-sf

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The Binding

The Binding

By Bridget Collins

The Binding Of Isaac

Imagine you could erase grief.

Imagine you could remove pain.

The Binding

The Binding Of Isaac Afterbirth

Imagine you could hide the darkest, most horrifying secret.

Forever.

The Binding Of Isaac Rebirth

Young Emmett Farmer is working in the fields when a strange letter arrives summoning him away from his family. He is to begin an apprenticeship as a Bookbinder—a vocation that arouses fear, superstition, and prejudice among their small community but one neither he nor his parents can afford to refuse.

The Binding Of Isaac Wiki

For as long as he can recall, Emmett has been drawn to books, even though they are strictly forbidden. Bookbinding is a sacred calling, Seredith informs her new apprentice, and he is a binder born. Under the old woman's watchful eye, Emmett learns to hand-craft the elegant leather-bound volumes. Within each one they will capture something unique and extraordinary: a memory. If there's something you want to forget, a binder can help. If there's something you need to erase, they can assist. Within the pages of the books they create, secrets are concealed and the past is locked away. In a vault under his mentor's workshop, rows upon rows of books are meticulously stored.

The Binding Of Isaac Four Souls

But while Seredith is an artisan, there are others of their kind, avaricious and amoral tradesman who use their talents for dark ends—and just as Emmett begins to settle into his new circumstances, he makes an astonishing discovery: one of the books has his name on it. Soon, everything he thought he understood about his life will be dramatically rewritten.

The Binding Of Isaac Items

Bridget Collins has written a beautifully imagined piece of fantasy historical fiction, a sumptuous love story, of poor farmer's son, Emmet Farmer, and the wealthy, privileged Lucian Darnay, doomed to be star crossed lovers. In this world, books are not what we would recognise them to be, books are for all those things that people feel destroyed by and cannot live with in their lives. They are extraordinary hand crafted, leather bound repositories of actual peoples memories, their secrets, grief

Bridget Collins has written a beautifully imagined piece of fantasy historical fiction, a sumptuous love story, of poor farmer's son, Emmet Farmer, and the wealthy, privileged Lucian Darnay, doomed to be star crossed lovers. In this world, books are not what we would recognise them to be, books are for all those things that people feel destroyed by and cannot live with in their lives. They are extraordinary hand crafted, leather bound repositories of actual peoples memories, their secrets, grief, and pain, erased for good after being stored in a book. Books are feared and forbidden, as Emmet finds to his cost when he is drawn to buy one. An unwelcome letter arrives for Emmet, an apprenticeship he cannot refuse, he will train to be a bookbinder under Seredith's tutelage, a sacred calling. For a while, Emmet has been ill, unable to contribute to the farm as he once did, but he, like others is afraid of bookbinders, a profession surrounded with ignorance, prejudice and superstition. He travels to Seredith's remote home, and surprisingly finds solace in his daily tasks, surrounded by a silence that turns out to be what he needs to bear his illness.

The narrative goes back and forth in time, from the time Emmet and his sister, Alta, meet Lucian Darnay, to the development of their relationship, and to Emmet's experiences with other bookbinders and their clients. The reader comes to understand how Emmet came to develop his mystery illness, and the effects and repercussions of bookbinding on his and Lucian's lives. Seredith turns out to be a remarkably ethical and moral bookbinder, storing and safely locking away the books in her vault. This is in sharp contrast to others, some bookbinders are happy to practice a corrupt, horrifyingly venal form of bookbinding for the rich and powerful that uses and abuses people. These bookbinders illegally sell and trade the books for profit, often to those with a prurient interest in the secret lives of others, and for the purposes of blackmail. In a story of murder, magic, separation and ruthless powerful forces, do Emmet and Lucian's love stand any chance in a hostile world?

Collins engages in complex world building in this utterly beguiling novel, making this world come vibrantly alive with her detailed descriptions of time and place, whilst relating a moving and original love story that charms and captivates. This is Romeo and Romeo for the modern age, the characterisation is compelling, with Emmet and Lucian's love crossing the social class divide, moreover a love story that crosses boundaries in so many other senses too. This is brilliant storytelling, that immerses the reader in a past where books are a dangerous and secret commodity, and a forbidden love that threatens to destroy Emmet and Lucian. Highly recommended. Many thanks to HarperCollins for an ARC. ...more

We've been called witches since the beginning of time. Word-cunning, they used to call it of a piece with invoking demons! We were burned for it too. The Crusade wasn't new, we've always

The Binding

been scapegoats. Well, knowledge is always a kind of magic, I suppose. Emmett Farmer is a young man with issues. He used to think that he would inherit his family's farm. It was the life he was used to and the road he expected to follow to, and beyond, the horizon. But he has not been himself lately. His abilities have deteriorated. He loses himself, in time, suffering dizziness, nausea, and weakness. Some say he was cursed by a witch. When he is offered an apprenticeship with a bookbinder, it offers a way out, however frightening the career and his mentor might be.

Bridget Collins - image from United Agents, UK

Despite some raw similarities, bookbinding in Bridget Collins's world is not quite the same as it is in ours. Emmett trains with the elderly Seradith, a woman seen as being a witchy sort by some of the locals. In fact, bookbinding is seen as a dodgy sort of work. What is bound in books here are memories. Instead of sharing recollections or stories, as they do in our reality, the memories bound into beautifully crafted leather books in this world are removed from clients by binders. Unlike books in our world, which are designed to be shared, these books are meant to be hidden. Being on the NY Times Top Ten list would kinda defeat the purpose.

At least that is the intent. Cheat on your taxes? Pay off your mistress to keep quiet at the height of a political campaign? Sell out your nation's security in return for real estate consideration by a foreign enemy? Awkward. But there is a solution, well, for part of it, anyway. Go to a binder and the memories will be nicely removed, leaving your tiny mind virginally memory and guilt free, and ready for that sit-down with whoever might be heading an investigation. If memory-cleansing bookbinding existed in our world, I imagine there would be a long line of potential clients. Of course, it might be a challenge to find binders with the innate talent to make those memories move from a client's brain to the page. One can train in how to work the leather, sew the pages, and do all the material steps entailed in constructing such a book, but only those with a special gift can smooth the passage from one medium to the other. Emmett Farmer, it turns out, has such a gift. It does not help much with tilling fields, but is crucial for this special craft. As the hours passed slowly, full of small, solid details; at home, in the busyness of farm life, I'd never had the time to sit and stare, or pay attention to the way a tool looked, or how well it was made, before I used it. Here the clock in the hall dredged up seconds like stones and dropped them again into the pool of the day, letting each ripple widen before the next one fell. Emmett acclimates to Seradith's remote locale (out in the marshes), begins to learn the manual end of the binding craft, and is eager to move beyond to learn what bookbinding is really all about (he does not actually know). He is particularly curious about what goes on beyond certain forbidden doors at Seradith's emporium, but even glancing inside such doors causes him major episodes of what his boss calls Binder's Disease, costing him days of consciousness and bringing forth strange visions.

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These strains increase when certain clients arrive. When he finds a book with his name on it, Emmett realizes that he is less than whole.

Part Two of the novel is Emmett's bound story as reported in that book. Part Three returns us to Emmett's now, and how he deals with what he has learned. More than that about the goings on risks spoiling a key plot twist. But it does touch on forbidden love and the dangers of loving outside one's class, however that may be defined.

The Binding is an engaging page turner of an historical fantasy, particularly the first third, in which we are introduced to Collins's world, an amalgam of the medieval and circa 1890 rural England. The mystery of Emmett's affliction is enticing and his experience at Seradith's is riveting. I found Part Two, Emmett's bound story, interesting, but nowhere near as gripping. Part three is pretty much a continuation of Part Two, but with Emmett aware of his history, so is more of a cloth with the second than the first part. Not to say that the latter two are not good, just not so fabulous as the opening, in terms of the engagement of the story, at least. In terms of looking at the socio-economic implications of binding, they are wonderful.

One fascinating thing is how Collins came up with her concept. She was working as a volunteer at Samaritans, a non-profit that offers people who will listen for people who need to talk. What would it be like if I could reach out and winch that memory from you? She was also taking a book-binding class at the time, and a happy combination was conceived. In setting her story in late 19th century rural England she uses some history of the era to correspond with events in the created reality. For example, the Binding Law of 1850 in Emmett's world corresponds to the 1850 legalization of gin (I'll drink to that!) in English law. The Crusades here, for example, were not about perceived Middle Eastern outrages, addressed with European outrages, but were focused on scapegoating binding for the social and economic disruptions brought about by the rise of capitalism. Binders are viewed as women accused of witchcraft have been in our world, dealers in mysterious practices, necessary for providing needed services, but not to be trusted, and maybe evil.

There are many novels that use memory loss as a core mechanism. Some elements of these are fairly common. How is memory lost? Literature is rich with examples, usually of the traumatic sort, usually involving violence, typically a blow to the head. These tend to populate books in which memory loss features as a Maguffin for propelling a thriller or mystery. Next down the list is memory lost through illness, typically Alzheimers' disease. Still Alice fits in there nicely. There are stories in which memory loss is via external misadventure of a broader, science-fictiony sort, things like plagues. The Book of M is a wonderful example. Less populous is the sort in which memory is willingly surrendered, Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind pops to mind. (and we elect to keep it there, for now) The Binding relies on the last of these, substituting a bit of magic for the sci-fi explanation offered in Eternal Sunshine.

What lifts The Binding above the crowd of memory-loss novels is its consideration of the societal implications of voluntary forgetting. There are complications, of course, and they are wonderfully explored. Some with power want others to forget what they have done. Think of it as an employment

contract, or a user agreement for partaking in pretty much any software. You agree to this and that, and such and such, which will entail the surrender of some inalienable rights. Just click agree at the bottom of the mouse-print form. But damn, you need the job, or want to use the software. However, what if what you are surrendering to the seller, or employer, is the right to your own memories? And what if the person in power has done something they would rather you not remember? You might find yourself (or what is left of you) wearing out a path to the binder's shop for a bit of a memory trim (Boss just sent me over. Says you should just take a bit off the top, please, and close on the sides, ok?) I will leave to your imagination (and the book of course) how such a system might be abused. So, we have an author who looks at political power in a very personal way. Workers of the world unite! You have nothing to lose but your—wait, what was that again? Continuing the image, what if you are starving and selling your memories as a way to put food on the table, the way many in poverty engage in sex work to make ends meet? Puts me in mind of the Beggarwoman from Sweeney Todd (Hey, don't I know you, Mister?) Which of course presumes that there are binders out there with somewhat lower ethical standards than the very righteous Seradith. Shocking, I know.

To lift the novel even higher is a parallel consideration, the significance, the power of books themselves, what it means to write a book, to read a book, and to share the experiences of another through the written page. I was reminded of The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society and The Book Thief.

What if we look at books as a manifestation of self? Not exactly a stretch. Do authors lose a part of themselves when they commit their thoughts to the page? Is reading a book written by someone else a form of voyeurism? Just as in our world, books can be used for benign or malign purposes, books are treated as treasured valuables by some and as a form of personal or mass-produced filth by others. Seradith, essentially, amputates memories, as a physician would take an unhealable limb, a benign act, and saves the bound memory in a beautifully crafted book, kept safe in a vault. Others may make use of such books for corrupt purposes. You, yes you, reading this, you know the power of books, how they can act like a drug, slaking, temporarily, an unquenchable thirst. Very drug-like, no? How about the power of books to heal? Ever read anything that made you feel better? Certainly any well-written memoir can offer one a view of someone's inner life, but at least in our world, that does not require that the author forget what she has written. Books change lives, whether we read or write them. For writers, a part of themselves definitely finds its way onto the page. And a world in which all books are locked away sounds rather medieval.

Collins offers a bit of wry perspective on writing. There's a growing trade in fakes, you know. Does that concern you? He paused, but he didn't seem surprised not to get an answer. I've never seen one—well, as far as I know—but I'm curious. Could one really tell the difference? Novels, they call them. They must be much cheaper to produce. You can copy them, you see. Use the same story over and over, and as long as you're careful how you sell them, you can get away with it. It makes one wonder who would write them. People who enjoy imagining misery, I suppose. People who have no scruples about dishonesty. People who can spend days writing a long sad lie without going insane! My father, of course, is a connoisseur. He claims that he would know instantly if he saw a novel. He says that a real, authentic book breathes an unmistakable scent of—well. He calls it truth, or

The Binding

life. I think maybe he means despair. I doubt that despair is what you will experience on reading The Binder. This is a marvelous read, a thoughtful, engaging novel, featuring a large dollop of Dickensian social commentary, while following an appealing everyman through the perils of coming of age, and offering in addition insightful observations on memory-as-self and the power of books. I was sure I had something more to say, but I seem to have forgotten what that was.

Review Posted " January 4, 2019

Publication

-----UK " January 10, 2019

-----USA " April 16, 2019

=====EXTRA STUFF

Links to the author's personal, Twitter and GR pages

If you check only one interview with the author, make it this one, in which the author talks with her US editor. The Library Lovefest audio is about 40 minutes long on Soundcloud, and is well worth the time invested. - Editors Unedited: Editor Jessica Williams in Conversation with Author Bridget Collins

Lists

-----GR list of Amnesia and Memory Loss Fiction

-----Popular Memory Loss Books on GR

-----Books featuring amnesia

The Memory Files - film

-----Memento

-----Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind

-----The Bourne Identity (film)

-----The English Patient (film)

The Memory Files - fiction

----- The Bourne Identity (novel)

-----The English Patient (novel)

-----Still Alice

-----The Book of M

-----The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society

-----The Book Thief

Bookbinding

-----from Instructables.com - How to Bind Your Own Hardback Book

-----Self-Publishing Basics: 5 Book Binding Styles Illustrated ...more

The Binding Of Isaac Repentance

This is a difficult one to review.

I think I expected this book to be more fantasy than it currently is. It started very slow for my liking, and I think if it wasn't all the PR campaign and the interest that's built on Social media, if this was a book I've myself picked, I'd probably give up around 20%. But I continued reading because I was really intrigued, also the reviews are really good for this book. Sadly I will not join the fan base, this time. I confess, I stopped proper reading at 40% t This is a difficult one to review.

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(view spoiler)[In the end, it's a story of an awfully bad man and his abuse, and a gay romance alongside - not sure which one is the main and which one is the side story. (hide spoiler)]

Settling in 2 stars, sorry I think it deserves probably more stars. I'll be tempted to say 2.5 but no option. Given better books 3 stars so sadly a 2.(I've changed my mind a few times now, sorry!)

Thanks for Borough Press for a copy of the book in exchange for an honest review. ...more

The premise of The Binding in one sentence : terrible people are terrible, and when I say terrible what I really mean is everyone. It's terribly gruesome and disturbing at times and portrays abuse in many shapes, yet I couldn't look away. For the past few days, I've been wondering why I was so damn affected by a novel that many of my friends found lacking. Yet I'm pretty sure that the sense of dread I felt came from how very realistic the horrors pictured were : you can wrap up abuse with a fan

The premise of The Binding in one sentence : terrible people are terrible, and when I say terrible what I really mean is everyone. It's terribly gruesome and disturbing at times and portrays abuse in many shapes, yet I couldn't look away. For the past few days, I've been wondering why I was so damn affected by a novel that many of my friends found lacking. Yet I'm pretty sure that the sense of dread I felt came from how very realistic the horrors pictured were : you can wrap up abuse with a fantasy bow, in the end what remains is the profound easiness with which we human beings hurt others every single day.

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In my opinion Bridget Collins did a fantastic job of capturing humans' inner cowardice and it moved the secret parts of myself that I'd rather ignore. Because really, ask yourself this: how would we react if we could choose to forget our tragedies instead of grieving? Who would we be? I want to believe that I'd be stronger than that, but at some point I had to take a break to breathe because the worst is, I understand the appeal way too much. You can't imagine how many times I silently thanked the world for not making it a choice I could envision when, well- when being numb seemed like a fucking treat compared to the sea of despair I was drowning in.

And perhaps that's why *The Binding* reminded me of something that I think is forgotten too often : we read with our heart. No matter how organized we think we are, how specific about the amount of points we give to the world building, the writing, etcetera, in the end what we really do is take a look at our heart and decide. And it does not mean we're bad reviewers! It does not mean that knowledge and skills don't influence our feelings either, because they should, and they do, but all the same, reading a book is such a subjective experience. Reading *The Binding* was incredibly intense for me, and if you know me even a little bit, you'll understand why I couldn't give it anything less than five stars.

Now if you feel like I've written the longest introduction ever and are waiting for me to tackle the plot, you should know that I won't. I'm actually pissed at the blurb - do NOT read it - that gives away a plot point we only learn at the end of the first third of the story. As much as I understand what the marketing team was doing, I genuinely think that revealing that information was counterproductive, because

- a) it diminishes the tension a bit and
- b) it creates expectations that will NOT be fulfilled and we know how often that can ruin a novel.

So, listen : don't go in there expecting a fantasy novel with a strong world-building and you know, explanations and stuff. *The Binding* is most definitely not that and you would be disappointed. It's a character study with a captivating premise and a strong romantic element. Really, it's more about the psychology of the characters than anything else. Those books are my favorite, but well, as I said: it's subjective.

Most surprisingly, *The Binding* reminded me of Dickens' and Zola's works in the way the dichotomy between rural and urban is pictured, with the underlying idea that the rural world is more innocent, and that the city's greed and selfishness spreads into people like a disease. I understand how it could annoy readers and I would have preferred if the comparison didn't feel so simplistic at times, yet it did fit very well the story and therefore didn't bother me.

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The thought sends ice down my spine. If only I were a hero. The sort of people who would risk that (...). But I'm not.

The relationships portrayed are... messy, and I understand why some readers hated the boys. I just. I couldn't.

Both Emmet and Lucian were so unlikable sometimes and yet I loved them so much. There's an enemy to lovers romance with a love triangle of sorts... except not really.

Sigh.

Okay so: I know many people will disagree with me, but what I mean is- there's unrequited love from another character and yes, I know it's a love triangle for some people but nah, not for me. It did hurt, though, because that character was young and sweet. Yet. I don't know, friends. Love is selfish. I. I don't think we can prevent ourselves from loving someone, even if it hurts someone else we love. I just don't believe that. Do I wish it wasn't this way? Sure. But there's a difference between what I wish and what is. Nobody's cheating. Trust is broken, but I don't think the characters had any other choice, and I'm not gonna judge them for the way they tried to navigate a society so profoundly homophobic.

As for the last part - I truly loved the change of POV. Honestly? I really, really needed it because I just couldn't handle Emmet's voice anymore. Moreover, we cannot fail but feel that something... is not quite there. It's lacking, certainly, but hear me out : in my opinion, it's entirely on purpose. It just... fits when nothing else would have. Annnnnnd you're probably wondering what the fuck I'm talking about, but really you'll have to read it to get what I'm saying. Sorry.

Finally - I loved the open ending. I wouldn't say that it was what I wanted, but I genuinely think that it was what the story needed. Many things are left unresolved, some of the villains are running wild, but it's not the kind of story we can wrap with a little bow. In my opinion what mattered was the journey and what a journey, it made me feel SO MUCH. My god. I reread the last few pages one billion times.

TW: Rape, murder, graphic suicide, homophobia, abuse (physical and sexual), animal cruelty, pedophilia

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The Binding Of Isaac Game

I'm starting to become a little disillusioned with upcoming releases by unknown or new-to-me authors. THE BINDING has an excellent marketing campaign, a gorgeous cover, and was a book I wanted to get into my hands, desperately, due to a (inaccurate) comparison to a book I love. However, for this reader, the insides don't match the outsides.

This book has three parts to it. The first act is slow, plodding, and mired in the familiar 'other characters know things but cannot tell the protagonist for reasons' trope. I'm starting to become a little disillusioned with upcoming releases by unknown or new-to-me authors. THE BINDING has an excellent marketing campaign, a gorgeous cover, and was a book I wanted to get into my hands, desperately, due to a (inaccurate) comparison to a book I love. However, for this reader, the insides don't match the outsides.

This book has three parts to it. The first act is slow, plodding, and mired in the familiar 'other characters know things but cannot tell the protagonist for reasons' trope. Act two is a major reveal, a flashback, and the only part of the story I enjoyed. Act three is a new perspective, misery, and extra unpleasantness.. when there was already a lot of that to go around.

The concept of binding memories, locking away emotions, is fascinating. There was something of a cultural clash of the rural, old-world, respect for such an exchange, versus the more urbane and materialistic -- and not to mention vile and/or wicked -- reasons for doing so. But ultimately all it did was introduce more terrible characters into a book that wasn't filled with many good ones to begin with. Infact.. I struggle to think of more than one.

There is darkness to this story, unpleasantness, and any of the magic I was hoping for was really just limited to the strange practice of the binding and the few binders who could do it. This was a lot less fantastical than I thought it would be and the only surprise was that there is a queer romance within these pages.

If I rated this book by the parts of it, it would be a slow terribly paced two star for part one, a sweet blush of a three for the middle, and an awful one star for the final section. There is a HEA of sorts but.. yeah, I don't know. This was just a lot more depressing or maybe just.. stark? bleak?.. than I thought it would be.

Great premise. Some potential. And when I was reading it, it was a smooth read; though once put down it was hard to build up the desire to pick it back up. Overall, though, I wish I could bind my memories of THE BINDING and go back to when I still had stars in my eyes at the thought of reading something new and wonderful.

** I received an ARC from the publisher (thank you!) in exchange for an honest review. ** ...more

The Binding

2.5 stars. I had high hopes for this book, really loved the premise, but I think it's one of those cases that it delivered something else than promised. The idea sounded very original; people's bad memories binded in a book, so that they don't remember them anymore. It sounded like it has fantasy elements, some magic with interesting characters. The book is divided in 3 parts. I loved the first part, but things went into a completely different direction starting from the second part. The rest of

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Thanks so much to Harper Collins for an ARC of this book, in exchange for an honest review. ...more

The Binding Of Isaac Flash

4*****

This book was spellbinding and included an original concept (about books!) that I had never read before; it completely ensnared me into its pages.

The tale starts of with Emmett, a farmer from a small house in the country, plagued by nightmares which in turn effect his work. Suddenly one afternoon, he receives a letter, telling him that he must go to be a binder, a job that promotes fear, prejudice and superstition among communities.

Emmett goes to be an apprentice as a binder so that one day 4*****

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The tale starts of with Emmett, a farmer from a small house in the country, plagued by nightmares which in turn effect his work. Suddenly one afternoon, he receives a letter, telling him that he must go to be a binder, a job that promotes fear, prejudice and superstition among communities.

Emmett goes to be an apprentice as a binder so that one day he can do it himself. In this remote house of his mentor, he will learn to craft beautiful books and will learn to create something, each time, that is unique; a memory. A book binder's responsibility is to help those who want to forget and erase memories. His role is to assist and take these memories and place them in beautiful bindings where the person never has to remember the memory again. However, not all memories are good memories and not everyone wants to forget. This novel really explored the dark side to bookbinding and the manipulation and exploitation used by those who rely on the craft.

One day, to Emmett's complete surprise, he finds a book with his name on, curious as to what the pages hold...

This book was completely intriguing and compelling. I loved how it used books as a way of holding sacred memories, not imagination, whether these be good or bad memories from a persons past. This book also had a sweet romance and historical fiction thrown in as well. 5/5 Also the cover is gorgeous!

...more

I FREAKING LOVED THIS!

Historical fiction mixed with folklore and magical realism, and a love story that gave me all of the feels!!!!!!!! YASSSSSS. Do yourself a favour and read it.

The Binding

Perfect for people who liked *The Thirteenth Tale* or *The Shadow of the Wind*

ONE FAULT THOUGH

The freaking blurb on the back cover gave away a plot line that didn't occur until page 161.... Like I get that I probs would have figured it out anyway BUT STILL! Robbed me of some of my fun so bah humbug to you blurb writing t I FREAKING LOVED THIS!

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Anywho.... TAKE MY FIVE STARS AND MY MONEY AS I AM DEFINITELY BUYING THE HARDBACK EDITION FOR MY BOOKCASE!!! I borrowed this from the library and it's in trade paperback form and even that is the most gorgeous book you'll see!

Content / Trigger Warnings under the spoiler tag:

(view spoiler)[

Rape

Sexual violence

Homophobia

Animal abuse

(hide spoiler)] ...more