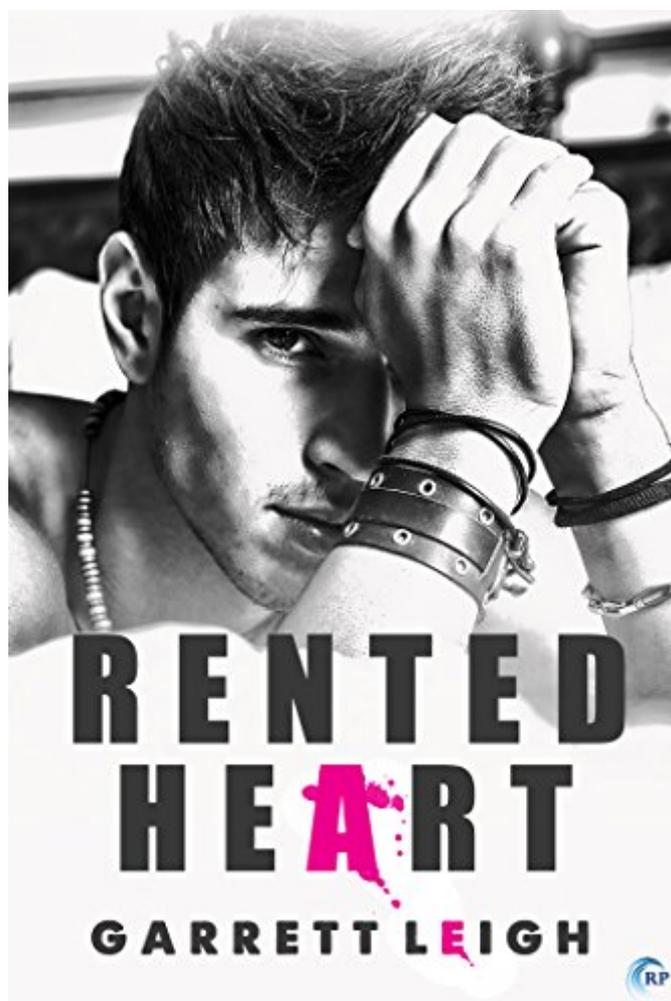


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Rented Heart



Synopsis

Ex-surfer-turned-businessman Liam Mallaney moved back to Holkham, Norfolk, to mourn the loss of his husband. Grief and loneliness keep him a solitary figure, and he likes it that way. There's no room in his broken heart for anything else. Rentboy Zac Payne left London and most of his demons behind, but he still only knows one way to make a living. When he spots Liam in a club one night, it seems he's found his mark. But Liam proves nicer than he bargained for. Their arrangement quickly becomes too complicated for Zac, who has other things on his mind: namely his BFF and wayward flatmate, Jamie. Zac owes Jamie the world, and even as Jamie's drug addiction destroys all they have, Zac won't leave him behind. Besides, Liam knows nothing of Zac's home life, too caught up in his own head to think much beyond the crazy heat he and Zac share. But when trouble comes to Zac's door, putting his life in danger, Liam must set his grief and anger aside to pick up the pieces of Zac's shattered heart and his own.

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Customer Reviews

I fell for these two *so* hard! Liam is touch starved and lonely, still in the depths of grief for the husband he lost two years earlier after ten years of blissful marriage. Zac is a former drug addict and current rent boy who is dedicated to the care and support of his best friend Jamie, a current drug addict and rent boy who will do anything for a score. When these worlds collide, is Liam going to be able to say a final goodbye to his husband? Will Zac's past come back to haunt his present? And how will Jamie's issues affect the burgeoning bond between the pair? This is a grab your heartstrings and pull kind of book. Zac's willingness to do just about anything to ensure he keeps his apartment and a safe place for Jamie when he comes home illustrates the depth of emotion he carries for his best friend. Zac is quite practical about his life, but he keeps getting drawn into the gravitational pull of Liam. Not drawn enough to give up his clients and potentially be back on the streets, however - that practicality I mentioned, remember? Liam never looks at Zac as anything other than a human being, despite paying for his services in the beginning. He's cautiously optimistic about spending time with the man, but his heart still hurts. Running the company that he and his husband created keeps the man weaving through his daily life, compounding what is already a hard grieving process. The plot was lovely, and the subplots kept things interesting. The pacing was also on point. The main characters were written amazingly well, and the chemistry between them was never in question. I wasn't bothered at all by scenes involving Zac's clients, but if that's a thing for you, then you've been warned.

Emotional, intoxicating, and engaging, *Rented Heart* was quite the entertaining read for me. There's nothing better than a book that grabs me from the beginning and doesn't let me go until the very end. One with a broken heart from a lost love, the other living a harsh life, Liam and Zac story did exactly that. Their journey from john and rentboy to something more dragged me in and left me with a happy smile at the end. Liam is described as being an ex-surfer-turned-businessman. I totally saw the businessman part, but didn't identify him as being a surfer. Must be the Cali side in me. Nevertheless, his was an amazing character. Not too overwhelmingly strong, yet not a pushover. There was certainly a fragile, unsettled side to him that was easy to relate to. Zac, I just wanted to give a big hug (and a hot meal). As rentboy, nice name - so much better than hooker, just broke my heart. He's managed to get himself clean and off drugs but his self-esteem isn't all there, stuck in a loop as selling himself for sex. The two together were just amazing as they floundered around their relationship. Zac feeling unworthy of love and Liam not wanting to risk his heart again. Their interactions and slow build to something more complicated, more emotional, was captivating. Let us

not forget, it all started with sex, which BTW was pretty hot. That evolved into something special as well, from strictly physical to truly meaningful. Now what's a story without a few secondary characters? You have Rosa and Mike, Liam's sister and brother-in-law. Both were a nice bonus to the story, helping fill in questions about Liam. Then there is Liam's father, Len. A victim of Alzheimer's, Liam struggles to come to terms with his father ever-present deterioration. He added a sad but nice edge to the story.

Just when I think Garrett Leigh couldn't possibly top her previous novel, she goes and writes *Rented Heart*. After the first time I read something she wrote "Between Ghosts" I knew I had to read more of her work. The second book "What Remains" reinforced what I suspected before: that Garrett Leigh was one hell of a gifted author. And now, my heart hasn't returned to its original state, still squeezing tightly in my chest, after having finished reading this third novel of hers. I know I need to work my way through her back list, but if even half of it is as astoundingly good as any of the three aforementioned titles, then saying I'm in for a treat would be the understatement of the century. There's an undeniable rawness and a brutal honesty to her writing. Her stories, at least the ones I've read so far, have her characters that are far from perfect, but given the choice to take them or leave them, you stay on, wanting to get to know them and witness how they hurdle whatever challenges they're facing. In her latest work, Garrett Leigh masterfully does that again. Twenty-three-year-old Zac Payne's move from bustling London to more sedate Norfolk has meant fewer people he can mark. There was a reason for the move, even if it meant a hit to his finances. All he needs is enough to make sure he and his best friend continue to keep a roof over their heads and to be able to live on the basics. When Zac spies thirty-four-year-old Liam Mallaney lingering outside of a gay club, he knows who he wants "and whom he hopes will agree to paying" in his bed. While Liam has never been propositioned nor been with a hooker before, he just wants a physical "sexual" distraction, one that he needs far more than he'd care to admit.

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