



# Cracked

*K.M. Walton*

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Sometimes there's no easy way out.

Victor hates his life. He has no friends, gets beaten up at school, and his parents are always criticizing him. Tired of feeling miserable, Victor takes a bottle of his mother's sleeping pills—only to wake up in the hospital.

Bull is angry, and takes all of his rage out on Victor. That makes him feel better, at least a little. But it doesn't stop Bull's grandfather from getting drunk and hitting him. So Bull tries to defend himself with a loaded gun.

When Victor and Bull end up as roommates in the same psych ward, there's no way to escape each other or their problems. Which means things are going to get worse—much worse—before they get better....

## Cracked Details

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## From Reader Review Cracked for online ebook

### **Mary-Megan says**

Call me cynical, but when I read a book about hard-hitting themes like bullying and suicide, I don't necessarily want "happily ever after." While this book does a decent job tackling these two serious topics, I felt the rosy ending for these characters didn't jive with reality.

This novel is told through the eyes of two boys - chapters alternating between Victor and William "Bull". Victor is a victim of bullying done by Bull. The bullying has gone on since kindergarten and hasn't improved. At the same time, he's reminded constantly that his parents never wanted him and is repeatedly belittled by their selfishness and egos. While Bull is a bully at school, he is a victim at home to his grandfather's fists and his mother's neglect. Each boy is miserable and desperate for a way out. Victor tries suicide and Bull tries to defend himself from his grandfather with a gun but ends with getting himself shot. Now both boys are roommates in a psych ward, involuntarily committed for five days after "suicide" attempts. Through the people that they meet, the boys discover who they truly are and what's worth living for.

I felt as if this book did a great job of building these characters who you feel sorry for. You completely sympathize with Victor and his horrible parents and the bullying and how his only companion in the world is a dog knocking on death's door. You even feel bad for Bull, despite the fact that he's a bully. All of that works for the story. Then they're committed for five days and after four days they're magically cured? A magic cure is bad enough, but then they both fall in love in this psych ward in four days? What are the odds? At that point the book starts to lose its realism for me. First off, I find a cure in four days a bit much, especially for Victor. Bull was never suicidal to begin with, so I can believe it for him, but Victor had so much going against him - his parents went to Europe and didn't even come back when he tried to commit suicide. All it took, though, was for him to share his feelings and have a girl say he's worth living and now every thing's peachy keen? Again, maybe I'm just cynical, but it's all too picture book happy for me. Don't get me wrong, I'm glad that things worked out in the end, but it makes it seem too easy. While I don't have any experience with suicide, I've been given the impression that this is a serious struggle for a lot of people. Not everyone has a long-lost relative ready to step in a fight for them. Not everyone is going to meet a girl and want to turn it all around in a day or two. This book would have been more powerful if it was a little bit more realistic in terms of recovery.

Some people like fairy tale endings, but some topics don't lend themselves to that. While I can see this book as inspiration for people not to commit suicide and to stand up for bullies, I felt like it should be more sympathetic to the true struggles that people face in these situations.

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### **Lenore Appelhans says**

I cannot rave enough about this novel. I was so completely emotionally invested in these characters that I cried at least four times - and I hardly ever am moved to tears by books (maybe only around 10 in the whole history of my reading life post childhood).

More to come ...

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### **Nuisance Nonsense says**

While I absolutely loved the characters and the overall theme of Cracked, I didn't care much for the way Walton portrayed psychiatric units. Most of the situations in the hospital felt out of place. One thing that bothered me is the complete lack of interest from the nurses and staff when Victor tells them that he can't be roomed with Bull. In my experience, people who knew each other outside of the hospital or people who couldn't get along were put on a sort of restraining order where they weren't allowed within ten feet of each other. The whole point of acute psychiatric hold is to get you out of the situation that may or may not be a cause of your problem so that you can look at it objectively. If anyone you know outside is in there with you, they may get in the way of your recovery so it would make sense for the supervisors and nurses to move one of the boys.

Also, since you're supposed to be focusing on your recovery while you're hospitalized, the biggest pet peeve I have about Cracked is the romance involved on the unit. What irks me about this is that these hospitals are extremely strict on the whole forming-relationships-while-you're-hospitalized thing. That's one of the things that they stress continually throughout your stay. You aren't there to get laid or find your soul mate or make any longstanding relationship. You're there to locate your stressor and apply useful coping techniques to help you get through similar situations in the future instead of doing whatever landed you in the hospital this time. When Bull and another patient on the unit, were caught in Bull's bed by the nurse, they would have been punished in some manner. Whether it was solitary or Ten-Foot or even unit restriction. Hospitals enforce the no-relationship rule explicitly. The fact that they weren't reprimanded in any way really annoyed me. Add that to a girl from school that Victor has a crush on, conveniently getting the number of the hospital and being able to convince the nurse answering the phone that she was allowed to talk to Victor and you get the ingredients of a story that doesn't care much for accuracy.

Walton had the makings of a fantastic story. Great plot. Great theme. Outstanding characters. But instead of forming her plot around the realities of psychiatric hospitalization I feel like Walton did the opposite and it stunted the amazing turns it could have taken.

Ultimately, the reason I gave Cracked 3.5 stars is because it's one of those books that I enjoyed reading but felt that pieces of it fell flat. Parts of the book felt rushed or forced into a neat happy ending. It is a great read though and I will give credit where it's due, there are many great things about Cracked. Walton executed the characters and theme extremely well and I enjoyed walking beside Victor and Bull throughout their journey. These boys fantastically prove that no matter how different people are, they all fight their own battles and no matter how rough their struggles are they can get through to the other side. Overall, I definitely recommend Cracked to anyone who is interested in a fictional coming of age story about the acidic effects of bullying.

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### **Elisa Ludwig says**

Get out the Kleenex! This powerful story of a victim and a bully who by chance find themselves in the same psychiatric ward of their town's hospital will move you to tears (possibly repeatedly). In an even, direct prose style, Walton nails the voices of her heroes and doesn't sugar coat their difficult circumstances. And while Walton has conjured a compelling supporting cast of characters, it's Cracked's two vulnerable yet tenacious protagonists that will win your heart.

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### **Lablover says**

This book has been touted as a great book about bullying. It does give a very clear picture of what can happen to individuals when they are pushed to the extreme of being the target of bullies, whether they be adult or peers. The author also gives a good internal perspective of what the teens are feelings as victims of their situations. This story seemed more of a lesson in "don't judge a book by its cover" than in bullying. (Maybe teens will gain some perspective from it.) I was hoping to see more of what happens within the school environment as that is where we hear about the problems occurring the most. And as an educator we are often the people who receive the blame for "allowing" the bullying to occur. (We don't allow it, our hands are tied by administrators who are will not stand up to parents.)

The two main characters are victims of a type of bullying. However, they are more victims of horrible home lives. It was not what we in educational circles have come to know as bullying in the traditional sense. Victor comes from a wealthy home, where great is never good enough. He is an unwanted eyesore on his mother's \$10,000 couch. Yes, Victor is the target of Bull's physical violence, and taunts. But Bull's issues are even more a matter of his life at home. Bull is from a very poor home where alcoholism and abuse is a routine. Bull you aren't supposed to expect to be intelligent and Victor isn't supposed to have any problems at home. But underneath each person has their issues to deal with as well as their strengths. I guess I wasn't expecting such predictability because there has been so much hype about how great it is. The young adult reader will probably enjoy it. I think I was just let down by all the things I heard.

The ending seemed a bit unrealistic to me in that two teenage boys open up within a matter of days about what is going on in their lives and each one has an adult hero sweep in and start caring for them. That doesn't happen very often. It had too much of a fairy tale ending.

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### **Maggie61 says**

Loved this author's writing style as well as story line.

We have one boy being bullied by the same kid most of his school life. He is an outcast with no friends. He is invisible to his parents who remind him he was an accident and generally ignore his whole existence except when he may do something to inconvenience their lives. After his dog who was the only one that valued him passes away he is devastated and swallows a bottle of pills.

Then there is the second boy. The bully. And as we are shown the life he has we see a boy who also is an accident and lives in a place with no bedroom for him with a mother who has no clue what the word mother means and a grandfather who regularly smacks him around. This boy likes books and poetry and while you never really like him because he is a really mean bully you understand that behind the bully is another bully. And then after what is perceived as Bull's suicide attempt the two end up as roommates in the psych ward of the hospital.

This was a very realistic account of teens and what they go through. How things are not always as they seem and while it's easy to sit back and judge we really don't know what goes on in other people's lives. Life circumstances make people who they are and sometimes we need to look further and see the whole picture. Those few days spent at the hospital are healing to both boys as they see that maybe they do have some self worth, a new concept for them both.

And I am really glad that the storyline wasn't all happily ever after with the two boys being besties and all is forgiven as anyone who knows anything about bullying knows that is not likely. Scars like that will last a lifetime and even if you see another side of your tormentor you will never be their friend.

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### **BAYA Librarian says**

Victor is the quiet kid in class who gets picked on and bullied on a daily basis. His home life is no better. His parents blame the majority of life's problems on their son, stating that if it was not for him life would be perfect.

Bull (as you could probably tell by the name) is the primary bully in school. He comes from a broken home where he lives with his alcoholic mother and abusive grandfather. Bull is both physically and mentally abused, so he in turn takes all of his anger and frustrations out on his victim, Victor.

After years of agony and abuse from not only his main tormenter, Bull, but also his shallow parents; Victor decides that there is no other way to escape the pain than to end it all himself with a bottle of sleeping pills. Reaching the end of his own rope, Bull decides to take matters into his own hands and steals his mother's gun and goes after his physically abusive grandfather. Both boys plans go astray and both end up in the suicidal psych ward at the hospital.....where (surprise, surprise) they end up sharing a room.

Victor and Bull are mortified to learn that they now have to share their living/breathing space with each other. Each one blames the other for their own problems only to discover that both boys have much more in common with each other than with anyone else in their lives.

Overall, this is a very powerful book that touches on the ever-present topic of bullying. K.M. Walton takes a deeper look at the horrendous effects bullying has on both parties. There is something in this book that everyone will be able to relate to. I would definitely recommend this title.

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### **Raeleen Lemay says**

This book was decent, but I was definitely far from amazed while reading this.

I liked how the dual perspectives were done, where each chapter is sort of mirrored to the previous one. It really emphasized the point that even though these two boys came from very different places and situations, they both had plenty of reasons to be unhappy and hurting. Victor is privileged, but unloved by his parents, and bullied at school. Bull, on the other hand, is abused at home by his family, so he takes out his anger on Victor at school. It was a very interesting dynamic, and I enjoyed it.

HOWEVER, the writing in this book was so weak, and the author's attempts to replicate teenagers and how they interact with each other was cringe-worthy at best. None of the characters really felt authentic or fully formed, which made the book difficult to love.

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### **MLE says**

It wasn't written terribly, but the plot and characters felt more like an after school special than real people. The bad parts were bad, but the simplistic solutions, and overly neat ending made everything that came before seem less significant. I found myself wondering; if that's all it took to make things better, than was it

really that bad to begin with? I found the changes the characters underwent were too forced, and too abrupt. Bullying is an important issue, and, while I'm glad more authors are taking up the issue, I didn't feel that this book did a good job addressing it.

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### **Grace (BURTSBOOKS) says**

Hi friends, I'm gonna need you all to suspend the belief that I'm a nice person for just a moment while you're reading this review because oh my god, this book is trash and there is no way I can write this review while simultaneously being nice.

So, Cracked.... It's about these two guys that have terrible lives. Victor has parents that pretend he doesn't exist. Bull lives with his abusive grandfather and his drug addict mother. Victor is a loner and Bull bullies him. Somehow, they end up as roommates when they're both admitted to the hospital after attempting to commit suicide. I'm sure you would expect this book to be about friendship or the very least these two boys learning to coexist and understand the others pain. Well let me tell you, you could not be more wrong.

\*Spoiler Alert\* Each finds a girl and falls in love and magically, in 5 days, has all their problems fixed. In five days. Five days???? Five days!!!! And they don't talk to each other, about anything productive at all.

Not to mention, it's written terribly. I've written better reviews while ugly sobbing. I've written better short stories as an 11-year-old child. I want to say this read like fanfiction but that would be an insult to fanfiction. Fanfiction is written better and more realistically. This is supposedly a mental health novel but this is the furthest thing from accurate to mental health in the entire world. I don't know what person in the publishing industry read this book and thought, "Yes! This needs to be published." It's terrible. There are no redeeming qualities, at all. It lacks consistent characterization, reason, clear plot progression, character motivation, realism. This could've been edited about 80 more times.

I'm honestly just surprised I managed to get through this book. The only reason I actually read it all the way through was to write this review....

So yeah, that's cracked; a supposedly mental illness and bullying book turned to romance and instant recovery story. I am disappointed and shocked and disgusted. Don't read this. Don't waste your time.

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### **Kelly says**

A solid read with two authentic and hurting male voices. Bull's the bully but acts that way because that's the way he's grown up. Victor, on the other hand, is the bullied and allows himself to be picked on because that's the way he's grown up. There's a nice exploration of families, of social class, and of the importance of knowing you're loved/giving love.

A couple of things didn't work for me, including the quick turn arounds of both boys when they'd hit rock bottom. I was hoping for a lot more interacting between them since there was so much for them to work through side-by-side, but instead (view spoiler)

Readers who liked Swati Avasthi's Split or Andrew Smith's Stick will like this one. This reminded me a little

bit of Amy Reed's Clean and Crazy, for both the institutional setting and the working-toward-recovery aspects.

Full review here: <http://www.stackedbooks.org/2012/05/c...>

Thanks Lenore Appelhans for gifting me this one!

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### **Vivien Keiling says**

Well hot damn! FINALLY!! A book that really gets to the quick on issues like suicide, abuse and bullying for **GUYS!!!** - and from both POVs of the bully and the bullied.

[it seems to be the case that a bunch of authors got the memo that, done right, the double POV can work magic!]

I am so sad to say that this one flew under my radar until recently...on the plus side, this means that her second book - Empty - is already out and I can read it right away!!

Very well written - this was a gripper. It was very moving, quite sad actually. And she just did an amazing job really getting into the head of both her main characters to the point that I found myself getting a fair bit worked up over both of their predicaments (wow, 'predicament' really almost belittles the content of the story).

I really enjoyed how she had the characters work through the situation, but maybe even more so, the amount of time she put into building the situation - really setting the stage - for the guys to get to the point where they could start to heal so that it had that element of realism in it...not just a happy-ending, make-believe story.

Definitely a good read for teen guys, I think the writing style would probably catch even reluctant readers. Again, it's nice to have a new book to point to that will (hopefully) speak to the guys directly...beyond some of Ellen Hopkins books, Loss, and Bullyville, I find it's rather slim pickings for this genre.

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### **Mahra says**

#### **Enjoyed reading this book so so so much!!!**

1. i am curious about the books that william read, i want to read them too
2. this book was so funny!! literally i loved bull(aka william) point of view
3. i wish there were similar books.

writing: 5/5 it was captivating that i couldn't let go of the book, i loved everything about this book, i think i like male POVs more than female POVs cuz they're short and funny i guess.

i hate reading it so fast but i couldn't let it go, i want a SEQUEL!

Characters:

William:

1. i have to say, he was my fav pov!
2. i really feel like he lived in such a crappy life, thank god things got better.
3. i am so happy he has someone to treat him in humane way, like frank.
4. i like how he still, sees his mom as his mom, i mean he doesn't hate her completely.
5. the part when he said that he can't have a girlfriend and imagined a horrible scenario. hurts. a lot.

Victor:

1. he has a TEACUP DOG!! i googled them they are sooo cute!
2. omg his parents are so annoying.
3. that part when he spilled pepsi on the expensive couch hurts, he was only 6 years old!!!
4. i loved the grandma when she scolded victor's parents.

all in all, i need another book please from this author.

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**Jay G says**

Want to see more bookish things from me? Check out my Youtube channel:  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCfer...>

This book follows two teenage boys living difficult lives. Victor is invisible to his parents and those around him. The only person who seems to notice him is Bull Maverick, the school bully who is constantly picking on him. But Bull is facing demons of his own, his abusive grandfather and drunk mother don't make his life easy. Both boys decide to take matters into their own hands. Victor takes a bottle of his mother's sleeping pills while Bull stands up to his Pop with a loaded gun. Upon awakening, they both find themselves in the psychiatric ward, as roommates.

The book was a very quick read and flew by, but I wasn't overly blown away by this book. For the most part it was boring and nothing really happened. The characters and writing were both weak in my opinion. I hated the dialogue and the way the author tried to portray the way teenagers communicated with each other. I also didn't like the 'love heals all' trope employed. The dual perspective between the two boys was interesting and I liked how they seemed to mirror each other. I liked that the attempt at the message was there, but the overall execution was weak at best.

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**Kimberly Sabatini says**

This book matters.

It's a simple as that.

Bullying is a pervasive issue in our society today and more people need to be reading a book like this. Why? What makes this one special? I have a few reasons why I think this is a stand out. But first, I'll be honest with you... K. M. Walton is a friend, an Apocalypsie and a fellow author at Simon Pulse. I sort of wish this wasn't true because there will be many people that assume that my respect and love for CRACKED is influenced by those connections. I'd like to take a moment to convince you why this isn't true.

In the past I've been a special education teacher that specialized in children with emotional and behavioral issues. My father was a counselor in a maximum security prison. The first year I taught I can remember coming home and asking my dad..."Where is the line?" He looked at me funny, wanting to know what line I was talking about. Then I explained that the children I worked with were obviously victims. Their issues were clearly connected to the things that had happened to them in their lives. But what I wanted to know was if they couldn't be helped, what day would they stop being victims and what day would they start to be bullies, offenders, abusers, prisoners? Suddenly everything was a blur to me. When might these children go from being someone I loved and wanted to help to being someone who might turn around to someone else and do the same things that were done to them? This thought and these children have weighed heavy on my heart all my life.

K.M. Walton doesn't give me the ultimate answer to this bigger than life problem, but she throws ropes to her readers--giving them something to hold on to. More important, she raises question and she does it with great skill. I don't think any one book or one person can give us the answers to such a large hole in humanity, but this is the kind of book that asks us to dig deeper as readers. It is a book that crackles creates sparks--the hope of illumination. It renews the fire within me to make the world a better, safer place--to stand up and have a voice. It helps me to put the people around me into perspective, so I can better navigate those who hurt. Because bullying doesn't happen to just children. It reminds me that the world is not black and white--but grey--full of shades of truth that blur the lines between right and wrong, good and bad and ultimately life or death.

I highly recommend CRACKED by K.M. Walton and if you're moved by the writing of John Green, Laurie Halse Anderson and K.L. Going, then I think you have a new hero to add to your bookshelves. If you read CRACKED I would love to hear what you thought. <3

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