



Heroes & Ghosts

S.A. Payne

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Ichi is a repressed scientist who keeps mostly to himself and just as he's about to take a vacation his plans are put on hold. After a night of drinking, he orders a doll from PETS only, when it arrives, he gets a surprise-- he's received a free upgrade to a Living Companion! He does his best to clinically and professionally deal with a Pet that was genetically engineered to be a companion, in every sense of the word, to another man. But when Ichi starts to suspect his new Pet isn't what he seems, his dull little life gets turned upside down.

Heroes & Ghosts Details

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Asynia says

This is a hard book to rate. Let's start with one of the most obvious problems with this book: I have read a lot of self published book, but I have *never* come across something as poorly edited as this one! It's full of homonyms, bad grammar, spelling mistakes and just plain bad writing. The POV jumps to the point of confusion and there is always *way* too much going on inside the characters' heads that should have been edited out.

This being said, this isn't an altogether bad story. This is the story of Ichi, a really lonely guy, the only gay male scientist at a space station. When his plans for a hot date during shore leave tanks, he gets drunk and orders a living sex doll, a PET. Afterwards he regrets it but it's too late to cancel. When the PET arrives, Ichi is stunned to realize that he has for some reason recieved a free upgrade to a "Living Companion", a better and more advanced sex doll model. He looks and feels completely human and can understand simple commands, but according to th doctor Ichi works with, who examines the Living Companion, his mental capacities are about the same as "a dim-witted dog's".

Anyway, Ichi, being very uncomfortable having what is essentially a sex slave living with him, tries his best but doesn't want to take advantage, as he sees it. He names the PET Rye and little by little it becomes clear that Rye isn't at all stupid, he used to be a human, but as a way of punishment has had his personality, memories and basically everything that was him, erased, and had since be "re-programmed" to be a sex slave. He *needs* and *craves* sex with men *all the time*, no matter how degrading or humilitating it is to him, that's what he's been prograded to feel.

As fragmented parts of Rye's past starts to emerge, Rye and Ichi start falling in love. Then, about 50% into the book something happens and the books starts being about politics, war, violence and other stuff.

Ms Payne has created rather an unique world here and even though I'm personally not that interested in intergallactic wars and stuff, I can recognise that this part is well constructed. A pity the same amount of detail wasn't given to the editing...

There was far too much violence in this book for my personal taste. Much of it, but not exclusively, of a sexual nature, and also way too much plain evil. It was teetering on the very brink of my hard limits several times, and I'm not sure I would have finished it if it hadn't been a challenge read. However, the characters were the strongest point by far in this book, both the MCs and several of the secondary characters were very well thought out and very easy to like (I'm talking only about the good guys here - the bad guys were beyond evil!).

Why the rating? I've never even considered writing a book myself, but I can imagine that it's really hard, and I don't know if Ms Payne actually had any help with the editing and stuff, so I think that might warrant an extra star. However, there *is* still the problem with a really badly written book, and the only redeeming factor for me is the likeable "good guys".

Like I said, this book was an uncomfortable read for me, due to the violence in general but mostly the sexual violence in particualar. There's also quite a lot of sexual humiliation and suff like that going on, mostly in flashbacks, but written with very much detail and far too lengthy.

As a conclusion: I would never have recommended this book to myself, and I'm going to think twice about reading anything more recommended to me by the the person who recommended this book to me (claiming it was "sweet").

Edit: It's now been a few weeks since I finished this book and ever since I read it I have been having really scary nightmares about it. I usually don't have nightmares, and nightmares about a book is a first for me. I don't know if this speaks good or bad about the book. On one hand I was apparently sufficiently engaged in the book for it to give me nightmares, but on the other hand I wish I'd never read it so I could have slept in peace instead. I wanted to add this to the review as a sign of how much this book touched me, but not, as I see it, in a good way. But if you want to read a book that touches you, and you don't care if it's in a scary way, then this might be a book for you.

Trix says

[It had a great starting point. A reclusive and clumsy scientist, being rejected by his part time lover, orders a living companion after too many drinks one night. It was fun to read about his embarrassment at having the entire station know about his purchase and him trying to get along with

Julia ♥Duncan♥ says

This was just so frustrating. I started off really liking it, I'm a sucker for stories about sentient sex toys. Sadly it was pretty downhill after that. The middle dragged horribly, there were random tangents all over the place and it was much too long, which is a complaint you will almost never hear from me. I was getting so bored and couldn't wait for it to be over. It picked up again at the end though, and I think I ended up liking it overall. The story is great, it just really needed tightening up and a bit stronger focus.

Also, there were MAJOR issues with the writing. There was way too much head hopping, sometimes the point of view would shift several times within a few sentences. It made those sections incredibly difficult to read. It was also rampant with typos, but even worse were the words that were just straight up spelled or used wrong. There were several instances of "ridicules" that should have been "ridiculous," "dominate" should have been "dominant," "than" used in place of "then," "other's" instead of "others," etc. There were also a bunch of incomplete sentences and sentences missing words. It drove me completely bonkers and distracted me from the story so badly. I have a fairly high forgiveness level for typos in things published for free online, but this was so bad I actually had to stop reading at times.

Straysod says

Wow. This story was simply amazing. I originally tried to keep this short, but there is no way to offer even a half-glimpse of what this book is without rambling a bit. I keeping coming back to add one more thing that I loved.

Right off the bat, though, I will say the blurb doesn't do it justice. I didn't read this for weeks because I thought the blurb made it sound vaguely fluffy, shallow, like it would be a cliché typically poorly written m/m romance. That is absolutely not what the book is. It is an amazing story, with excellent writing,

spectacular depth of characters and an amazing, engaging world. I definitely recommend you ignore the blurb and read some of the reviews if you are even slightly interested in reading it. Also worth noting, I HATE bugs, they are damn near a phobia for me, but even though a very important part of Ichi is how he works with bugs, it never bothered me. He was such an amazing character, and the way he was around his insects was so natural that I wasn't even slightly creeped out.

-The characters, both main and side, are spectacular. Well rounded, complex, amazing personalities. They are so well created they step right off the page and feel like old friends rather than fictional characters.

-The character actually grow in meaningful ways! In a lot of romance, there is either no growth (MCs go from 'perfect' to 'more perfect') or take abrupt 180 turns that are unreal. These characters grow and mature in realistic amazing ways. (view spoiler)

-The plot is amazing, with just enough action and tension to keep you on the edge of your seat. The sci-fi elements are well done. There are a few info-dumps, but they are the exception and don't detract from the amazing world being created.

-The sex is scorching hot, but unlike a lot of romance, it doesn't feel like a porno, where the sex is the whole point of the story. The story and the characters are what drive this book; the sex is meaningful, poignant, and an integral part of the story.

-There is no blatant divide, with one character being the obvious protector. The MCs are complex, real, complimenting each other's strengths and weaknesses. There is a give and take in who is the protector and who is being protected; they take care of each other in ways that are real and make sense.

-Speaking of character growth...(view spoiler)

I read this online the first time, and there are definitely some editing errors. They are not overly common, but for people sensitive to them, it is very noticeable, especially since the writing is of such high quality. The book is so good, however, that I have already ordered it from amazon. This is definitely going to be a book I read again and again.

Ok, ok, one more thing, one of my favorite things about this book. (view spoiler)

Vivian ?(????)? says

I don't know how to review this. I don't want to ruin this for anyway with my stupid fumbling words. This was just -- God so adorable, so sexy. So surprisingly dark and intense as well. It was just-- perfection.

100% recommended.

(the whole doll thing makes you think this is trashier than it really is. But oh God. It was not. Not at all. I just-- sigh.)

Sirenprincess says

I thoroughly enjoyed this book. The most amazing part about it is that the plot is so detailed, complex, and believable. This book is most definitely NOT all about sex. There is suspense and drama. It would be a page turner even if there was no slash. Believe it or not, the plot is what makes this book great.

On the downside, there are some remaining typos, but they can be overlooked. I was a little disappointed that the post-pet recovery phase was cut so very short. I would have preferred a more gradual improvement in Rye and more detail descriptions of his progress.

All in all, though, it was an excellent book that I would highly recommend to anyone that enjoys slash and extremely light D/s stories.

Bookwatcher says

Please, do me a favor dear reader of this review. Imagine a good sci-fi book... done?

Ok, now multiply it for 1000. Done again? Ok, now multiply again for 1000. Done it? Great. **This book is better than that. And no, I kid you not**

Ichi is an entomologist.

Nothing ordinary happened in his life, other than a few strange and deadly insects mating. That's his life, his research in a space station. He is the only human, in the middle of Avalons. They are also "humans" but only for their humanoid look. Avalons are telepathies, something that Ichi with his high logical mind can't understand. But he like his co-workers, specially Will and Amanda, that Ichi can almost consider close as friends.

He is lonely? Yes, but it's ok for him. His research seems promising, his "friends" are invasive knowing his feelings, but he like them... he is ok, no happy, just ok... because he can't get more from life, can he?

After a night drinking way to much a geek should Ichi did the unthinkable. He bought a pet... not an usual pet, as a dog or cat, but a doll... a living (sort of) being, build by PETS Living Companions... a brainless humanoid to use as sex toy... and well, the pet arrive... changing forever Ichi and all his friends life... because the Pet is him... Rye

Unfortunately I can't talk about Rye... you must read to know him, and well... everything can happen... even the most illogical of all possibilities... Ichi, learning about love.

I liked the multiple narration, that gave me a lot of different point of views... from main characters or not, all voices in this book were needed.

I liked the romantic, sometimes also erotic, scenes.

I liked Ichi and Rye long way to learn how to trust another human being.

I liked the sci-fi theme, very well explained and full of details.

I liked the action, got also scared knowing their love was doomed to worst...

because Ichi and Rye love is not a weak relationship... a stubborn and very closed mind scientist, with a amnesic human used as pet... nothing is easy, and everything will happen.

I can't give less than 5 stars and unfortunately I can't give more. So well, my 5 stars, and also my applause

SueM says

Ichi, the only gay male on a science space station, is devastated when his first holiday in over 3 years is suddenly cancelled due to a sector shut-down. Frustrated, horny and lonely, Ichi gets drunk with his friend Will, who tries to cheer Ichi up, by designing a human pet (artificial human) to Ichi's deeply-buried desires. When Ichi wakes up the next day, he's horrified to see the confirmation of his order flashing on the screen, something he must have done in the midst of his drinking binge.

After the sector is re-opened, Ichi's order fails to arrive, leaving him feeling both relieved and disappointed. Only long after he has stopped thinking about the pet arriving, the pet is delivered, and he finds he has been chosen to receive a random upgrade, meaning his artificial human has been replaced by a Living Companion - a human created on demand but without human intelligence/emotions.

Ichi slowly becomes accustomed to living with his pet, whom he has named Rye, but as he does, he notices something strange about him. Rye seems to show signs of fear and other human responses, which leads him to investigate his new companion. What he finds though, is something he never could have imagined. Together, Rye and Ichi explore Rye's past and through horror and danger, they find a love neither ever expected.

S.A. Payne's writing tends to explore the dark side of life, and this is no exception. While not as dark or brutal as Derekica Snake's writing, there is some similarity in the themes explored, and it is not for everyone. Admittedly, most of it happens in memories and dreams, but it still has a significant impact. That said, this is still a romance, and the finding of an unexpected love is even sweeter after a dark and sad past.

Leah says

I had no freaking idea what to expect from this book, other than a kick ass review one of my goodreads peeps wrote. The writing reminds me of Manna Francis, so detailed you see the movie playing before you. You'll laugh but to me the book was like a Spock and Kirk love story with imperialism, child sexual abuse, identity crises, BDSM, hot smexin, part psychological thriller, mystery, and ridiculous action. READ eet! :P

Alaina says

MMMMMMMMmmmmmmmmmm.....!

Theresa says

4.5 stars. Great sci fi world building. Nice character development for MCs and secondaries. Lovely relationship development. HEA. Definite fan fic feel. Overlooked editing issues because story was so good.

The FountainPenDiva, Old school geek chick and lover of teddy bears says

I'm actually blown away by how GOOD this novel was. Excellent world-building, great characterizations and a love story that flowed naturally. Heroes and Ghosts sat on my TBR stack for at least a year and once I picked it up, from page one I was hooked.

Ichi is a cool, detached scientist who comes a culture in which showing emotions is frowned upon. Unfortunately, he resides on a scientific station in which the residents are all psi-gifted and whom are much more open with their thoughts and feelings. Looking forward to a well-deserved vacation, his plans are placed on hold due to an outbreak. Worse, he was dumped by his lover for being "too old". Ichi gets drunk and with the urging of Will, one of his fellow scientists, orders what in essence is a "pet" from a company called PETS, which specializes in genetically engineered organisms--including human-looking clones. However, when the promised "pet" arrives, Ichi discovers that he's been given an upgrade and over time realizes his "pet" is far more than just some human toy. He also begins to fall in love with the mysterious Ren.

Ren, the "pet" is a man with secrets and sins upon his soul. He was engineered with double-nerve endings to heighten every sensation and is disgusted by the fact that no matter what was done to him, he feels it and is made to enjoy it. As he slowly begins to regain his memories, he discovers that Ichi is nothing like those who'd owned him before and that the shy scientist needs someone to love. Ren discovers his immense fighting skills when the station is mysteriously taken over by pirates, which causes everyone to wonder just who he really is.

Ishi and Ren are an amazing couple. Neither are perfect--both have deep emotional scars that even with the ending, one feels they will continue to deal with. The lovemaking scenes are sweet, hot and tender (and yes explicit). My only complaints are that it ended far too fast and not satisfactorily enough and that there were some not-too serious spelling mistakes (i.e. breath instead of breathe; it's instead of its). Still, what I liked was that Ichi and Ren are men and written as such. In spite of it being a "yaoi novel", there was none of the standard uke/seme pairing. Both men were strong and powerful in their own ways. And that's the hallmark of a good book, is that one doesn't want it to end, that the characters are like good friends. I will definitely be reading more from S.A. Payne.

Min says

'Heroes & Ghosts' surprised me in a good way. The description by goodreads certainly gave the novel the appearance of a really perky typical yaoi storyline of sex man toy falls in love with the innocent nerdy scientist. I frankly expected the scenario of a hot guy popping up, wooing the shy scientist, lots of bed action, and throw in some angst for good measure. I certainly didn't expect to find Ichi and Rye and the rest of the

crew. Both the characters are adorable, innocent, and hurt in their own ways. The storyline was also quite good and there was rarely a dull moment.

Narration (★★★★)

? Third person narrators, mostly from the point of view of Ichi and Rye

? Quite well-written. When I heard that there were grammatical mistakes and that goodreads called it a yaoi novel, I thought it would be slightly tough going through it, but the descriptions and story-telling were all quite good.

? There are some grammatical errors though, some repeated paragraphs, misspellings, nothing a good editor couldn't fix easily. These mistakes happen but do not detract from the story.

Characters (★★★★★)

? Sweet and unique characters. I loved both Rye and Ichi to death. The secondary characters were also equally as loveable. I even started to adore Rye's siblings even though we meet them at the very end. Frankly, they bring out the squealing girly girl in me and make me want to snuggle them all like plush bunnies.

Setting (★★★★)

? Futuristic with space travelling, some aliens too

? The best parts about the setting is the fact that not overly expanded upon to the point of suffocation and left me some space to imagine, but at the same time I had a feel for the surroundings.

? We never really get too, too indepth with the persecution of the Avalon peoples. It's prevalent, but mostly serves to explain culture and relate to Rye's own sufferings. Most of what the novel presents was like a history lesson to me. Even some of the sufferings of the closer characters by the events did not stir my sympathies as much as Rye's, which is probably due to the fact we spend much more time in his brain.

Plot (★★★★)

? Fascinating story with my favorite sprinkles of angst, snuggle moments, mystery, and the hot and sexy times (whoo)

? Felt that the ending was a bit too rushed and everything was resolved far too easily, though it was a cute ending

Overall (★★★★)

? I'll give it 4 stars out of 5. Not perfect but still a wonderful story. I'm hoping to read more of S.A. Payne's books in the future.

Jimmy Hanson says

A FANTASTIC novel. The depth, adjustment, and unique turn of all the characters just grabs you from the beginning and doesn't let you go. Honestly, Ichi's fascination and love for rabid carnivorous bugs is kind of repelling and pretty darn confusing ... but in the sections focusing on only him and bugs, his reaction and emotional attachment to them, it makes sense. That's incredibly hard to do, from a writer's point of view - making something so weird seem so normal.

Rye is a charming character, well build from the ground up. The transition from Pet to [==spoiler==] is gradual and very believable.

The ending conflict came across to me as a bit anticlimactic, but then again it seemed to Rye that it was as well - something more was expected, the result harder to obtain. Sometimes things really AREN'T earth-shatteringly hard though. The last few chapters/epilogue wrapped things up beautifully, and Rye's gift to Ichi?

Priceless. ^_^;

Dark_Shadow says

[I would have loved to meet the rest of the siblings though. And see how they cope with freedom. (hide spoiler)]
