



Personal Training

Andrew Grey

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Determined not to end up like his seventy-year-old diabetic father, Holton knows he needs to make a change. His quest to improve his health drives him to the gym, where he meets Marcus, a trainer with the body of a demigod. For three months Holton works hard, watches what he eats, drops a few pounds-and catches Marcus's eye not only for his slimmer body but for his dedication.

Holton can barely believe it when Marcus asks him out, but he isn't about to say no. Despite several common interests, though, Marcus and Holton have some roadblocks to overcome. A harrowing event from Holton's past has made him gun-shy, and Marcus has insecurities of his own. If their relationship is going to work, they'll have to get past their hang-ups and prove that what really matters is the man inside.

Personal Training Details

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From Reader Review Personal Training for online ebook

Jeff Erno says

Holton is a forty-two year old gay man who lives alone, has never been in a relationship, and is terminally shy. He suffers from social anxiety and lacks confidence when it comes to interacting with others. Not only does Holton find it difficult to build friendships, but he has some rather serious trust issues. He battles against low self-esteem and thus doesn't believe it's really possible for others to even like him.

After attending a birthday party for his father where he overhears family members commenting on him, comparing him to his dad, Holton realizes that he's got to do something to change his life. He resolves to begin with the physical. He joins a gym and goes on a weight-loss program. Within months he is a new man—on the outside.

Internally, though, Holton still has all of the same issues. It is when he catches the eye of his personal trainer, Marcus, that his real problems begin to surface. He initially is flattered and shocked that Marcus is even interested in him, and as that interest starts to blossom into something more serious, Holton is nearly paralyzed with fear. Although he realizes his panic is irrational, he is all but powerless to overcome it.

Andrew Grey is one of my favorite M/M fiction authors, and although I can honestly say I have enjoyed literally every book of his that I've been privileged to read, this one was especially meaningful to me. Upon first glance, I noted that almost every element of this story was wrong. *Personal Training* does not give us a young, aesthetically perfect protagonist who is drop-dead-gorgeous, charming, witty, and the envy of every gayboy on the planet. Instead he gives us a middle-aged, somewhat overweight man with average looks. The protagonist is not only shy, but his self-esteem issues make him socially retarded and practically unapproachable. He is overly attached to his parents, particularly his mother. Worst of all, he's a virgin.

If those elements alone are not enough to make the premise of this story unappealing, add to this that the love interest, Marcus, is initially rather shallow. He overlooks Holton and later feels a bit guilty for his behavior, wondering if he is too focused upon the superficial.

With all of this being said, the very same reasons that would likely cause me to dismiss this story altogether are the reasons that it is so exceptional. The portrayal of these flawed characters makes this story so real. As the character Holton is revealed, it becomes clear why he is the person that he is, and how very wrong it is to judge him for his shortcomings. It is also significant that a character as wonderful as Marcus is not perfect. The vast majority of us claim that we are attracted to a man because of who he is internally, but deep down don't we tend to judge a book by its cover?

The manner in which the protagonist and his love interest come to know one another is one of the best examples of character development I've seen. Like layers of an onion, Holton's true identity is slowly and carefully peeled back until he is completely exposed. The depiction is emotional, heartbreaking, and eye-opening.

This is a story that evokes extremely powerful emotion. Within a series that may at first appear to focus upon physical beauty, Andrew Grey raises some important questions about what real beauty actually is. His story also confronts the issue of how we deal with those people who have been victimized. There is a prevailing attitude that if a person suffers from low self-esteem and poor social skills they are simply self-pitying, and they need to just pull themselves up by the bootstraps, man-up, and quit their whining. Some readers seem to

have zero tolerance for sympathetic characters. This story reminds me why such themes are so very important.

I loved the story, and as it progressed I fell in love with both central characters. It was beautifully written, well edited, and delivered a very uplifting message. The lovemaking scenes were sensual and romantic, and the ending was quite happy though realistic. Honestly I think this is the best Andrew Grey novel I have read so far. I highly recommend it.

Phaney says

2014 Re-read:

Not a Mark this time, but a Marcus. That makes four of them now in this series. Although this one might be the renamed first Mark, since he worked in the same place in the same position in book two.

Ahem. Not that any of this matters in the face of this double-whammy of heaviness. The subject of the previous volume was already rife with tragic impact, but this time it's happening on two fronts. I am very lucky my boyfriend cheered me up just before I reached the end of this. This may not be a book to read when in a fearful or depressed mood.

This series' theme of "you could have anyone, so why the somehow defective me?" also begins to grate after so many repetitions. It does not help that I never liked the first phrase of that sentence. (Seriously, *no one* can have "anyone" they set their eyes on. Lots and lots of people have other tastes or are already taken or simply not interested for entirely different reasons, so...)

That said it's not bad in any way. It deals fairly well with difficult subjects (even if the sexual healing seems too easy). But unless the next two books in the series promise unmitigated joy I need a break with something completely fluffy. If it were just for the mush factor, this book would probably have sufficed, since it's laying the stuff on very thickly at the end. Just a lil silly there.

2011 Review:

Well... This *is* one of my pet plots. In some ways it was much harsher than I am used to, even if the incident causing the trauma wasn't described in effusive detail. But the impact on the victim's life was more far reaching than most of the others I've read about. Well, maybe just in a slightly different way, less overtly dramatic, more silently withdrawing.

I can't say that I felt completely comfortable with this story, but that is in the nature of the topic more than anything else, huh? I am weird. The way things developed and were resolved was actually sweet and touching. Quite thorough too. Again, this isn't the most emotive author out there but in his better books he certainly can tell a story. So the way things got resolved eventually left nothing to be desired; I actually agree with a lot of it, have in fact thought now and then in other stories of the kind that this could be a way to approach the issue.

Anyhow. It was pretty good in its way, if not exactly bowling me over in any way.

Michelle says

Hoopla

Lucy says

2.5

Some really heavy issues solved a little too simply and quickly for me.

Mandy*reads obsessively* says

This one actually had a deeper and a darker backstory than I expected.

Holten is shy and hasn't ever had a relationship or even been kissed in his 40yrs of life, but he has good reason for living a quiet and reserved life.

But one day he decides he wants to change and starts going to the gym, in a few months he sees a remarkable change in his body, and so does Marcus.

Marcus is the trainer and manager at the gym and asks Holden out. Holten has some difficult issues with his parents health to deal with and of course with the trauma he still hasn't gotten moved on from.

But as with all Andrew Grey books I've read, this one was sweet and has a satisfying happy ending.

(view spoiler)

Melora says

[I don't love the Gym Series books like I do other titles, but I will continue to get them and read them because they are entertaining and satisfying. I doubt I could pick Marcus out in a crowd because I didn't get a real sense for him other than his compassionate and supportive side, albeit that's a great side. Holton on the other hand felt more actualized. He starts out skittish and apprehensive, but has the courage and strength of will to realize he nee

ManOhMan says

Reviewed by Mia: I have to admit, I've always liked the Gym Series and this story was no exception.

It shows the steps that Holton takes to turn his life around and get healthy, and then eventually with some help from Marcus; deal with some ghosts from his past.

We see some of the guys from previous books in the series make an appearance and as always, Lonnie is there with his comments to lighten things up a bit. Although Holton also had a way of making me smile with

some of his comments.

I loved the interaction between Marcus and Holton and how Marcus supports Holton through the past, and present issues. As with any story, they have a few hurdles to get through during the course of their relationship.

Overall I thought that the story was well written and enjoyable.

A

Link: <http://manohmanreviews.blogspot.com/2...>

Alina says

I absolutely loved these series and I really hope there'll be more books :)

Vicktor Alexander says

4.5 stars

This story is definitely not for the faint of heart. Mr. Grey did a great job of depicting the fear, hesitancy and the desperate need that assails many victims of violence.

I'll try to speak of this story without giving too much away. No promises though.

Holton is a 42 year old overweight designer at the beginning of the book who realizes that he needs to make some changes in his life. He cleans out his kitchen and joins a gym where he meets Marcus. Marcus is a, to use Holton's words, "demigod." Tall, muscled, gorgeous, he can have anyone that he wants and shocking to both Holton and Marcus, the manager of the gym wants him.

The story follows Holton and Marcus as the two men begin a tenuous friendship and then a romantic relationship in the face of Holton's painful past, his low self-esteem issues and problems with his parents.

While short, this story has enough meat to it to leave most readers satisfied and waiting on dessert. It unfortunately doesn't provide the dessert to make this a well-rounded meal, but in keeping with the rest of the books in this series, it is, in my opinion, the best one so far.

Those who have experienced violence and trauma are to be cautioned, however, there is a scene where Holton's painful experience is described which might be slightly triggering. However, Marcus's gentle handling of Holton after his reveal is sure to cause the reader to sigh, it did that for me.

All in all I so enjoyed reading about Holton and Marcus and I look forward to more books in this series so that I can perhaps see this couple again or maybe a lengthier novel in order to get the slice of strawberry cheesecake that this story just missed presenting.

Well done Mr. Grey, well done.

namericanwordcat says

Holton and Marcus have a romance that is pretty touch and go because they both have lots of things to wade through.

I rooted for them but wanted more emotional intimacy. I liked the world and cast a lot and will read more in the series and I am a fan of plainer heros.

Arlyn says

While nothing about this book stood out to me as exceptional, I did enjoy the story, as well as the main characters.

Opposites attract as Marcus, a personal trainer, meets Holton, a product design engineer. Initially, sparks fly for only one of them. Holton is lonely, out of shape and in a rut. He has a sobering moment of clarity one day and decides to make a change. He starts with getting a gym membership. On his first day at the gym, he learns that the gorgeous Marcus will be his personal trainer. Holton is instantly attracted to the hunk but maintains a prudent distance from the man. After all, how could a gorgeous guy like that ever fall for a boring, nondescript man that has no social life? Even worse, if Marcus ever got to really know him, he would find out that Holton was a broken man... After that, he would surely make a run for the nearest exit.

Marcus is more than just a pretty face. When he first started training with Holton, it was business as usual. However, after watching Holton throw himself into his exercise routine with fierce, unyielding determination, he found that he was captivated with the man's drive and level of commitment... not to mention the mouthwatering physique that only grew more tantalizing as Holton's continued his workouts. Marcus decided to pursue the man, only to find that Holton was cut off emotionally and shied away from even the merest suggestion of a physical relationship. Still, Marcus was never one to back down from a challenge. He continued his pursuit the intriguing man, redoubling his efforts to break down the walls that held Holden captive and effectively shielded him from the outside world.

This book features hot sweaty men pumping iron, palpable sexual tension and a pretty decent storyline. If you're a fan of M/M romance, you can certainly do worse.

Katy Beth Mckee says

This is story about finding love and healing. Holton is such a sweet person but he has issues from his past. Marcus is drawn to him and he is willing to take time first in getting to know Holton then in making sure he feels comfortable.

Tam says

Holton is 42 and decides he needs to lose some weight so joins a gym. He's enamoured with manager Marcus but nothing happens and Holton works very hard to drop a few pounds and change his life. Suddenly Marcus notices him and makes a move, however Holton seems very shy and skittish, not just about Marcus but men in general. Marcus introduces him to some of the other guys (from the other books) hoping he'll ease up. Eventually Holton reveals that he was abducted and raped 20 years ago and he's never been with anyone since. Some discussion about taking what you want and before long he and Holton are getting it on. These books are pretty standard but I do enjoy them. I liked that Marcus admitted that he wouldn't have looked at Holton when he was heavier (not that much, 30 pounds or so), but I couldn't fault him. I think if in a room of total strangers, you are likely going to be attracted to the one that most resembles your idea, as personality doesn't manifest itself in looks. I did wonder though if Holton shouldn't have been in some therapy considering he'd never dealt with the attack. I'm not sure just pulling up your socks and the love of a good man can do the trick. Maybe. Everyone is different I suppose.

Charneen says

life is made up of real issues, and a lot of the time, we only focus on the ones that the media makes a large deal out of.

this book touched on two issues one that the world is aware of, obesity, he looks at how people overcome that, the challenges they face in an effort to better their lives. Holton is the perfect character for this, he teaches a lot about people face their problems and the effects there of.

the second issue we are faced with a moral dilemma, with having to look into ourselves, and see that we may have been ignorant on one of the largest issues faced in the world.

Rape, public outcry about this issue has reached such large proportions, it is not even funny. I for one am ashamed to admit that I never thought this issue would include men, but it does and they are just as hurt and torn about it, maybe even more so since the public consensus is that it couldn't happen so they don't seek out the help that they require or need for that matter. Holton showed us here our fear can rip you away from the things you most need in your life if the police didn't even believe him then how will the rest of the world.

Mr Grey, doesn't write books that leave you all gooey inside, he writes books pertaining to issues in our world that needs more focus, and I commend him for that fact. he is not afraid to make us stop and look at it up and redefine our view on the world.

L-D says

In this book, Holton realized he is starting to look like his father. Determined to take charge of his life, he throws out all his junk food and joins the gym. At the gym, he meets Marcus, the manager, who shows him how to work out. I read all the books in the series before I reviewed, so this review will be a bit different than it would be had I reviewed it immediately after reading it. Unfortunately, this book went right back to being

formulaic and was kind of a meh way to end the series for me. I would have liked this story more if it was standalone and not so similar to the other books in this series. Even the names in the series are starting to sound the same..Holton and Marcus, Hugh and Maddox...there was a Max in there somewhere too.

- 1) Age difference - Holton is much older than Marcus.
- 2) One of the MCs, in this case the Holton, was incredibly insecure and kept questioning what the other MC saw in him.
- 3) One of the MCs is afraid to commit because he's been hurt in the past. In this case, (view spoiler)

Of this series, I really only loved one of the books. Overall the series was okay. The books are quick, fast reads and good mindless entertainment. But book #4 was the standout for me.
