



Must Like Spinach

Con Riley

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Jon's future in New York should be bright. He's on the corporate fast track as an executive problem solver, yet he can't help feeling hollow. Yearning for a life spent outdoors makes no sense if he wants to flourish in this city, nor does losing his cool with clients when they make bad decisions. Only leaving the East Coast behind for three months can save his business reputation.

His exile in Seattle has unexpected upsides. Jon's rented home has a garden where his true passions blossom. It's overgrown yet idyllic—perfect if he didn't have to share it with another tenant. Tyler might be as cute as hell, and their landlady adores him, but Jon can't let himself fall for someone who seems lazy.

Three months could be enough time to see Tyler clearly, but choosing which to nurture long-term—love or a business career—might take Jon longer than one summer.

Must Like Spinach Details

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From Reader Review Must Like Spinach for online ebook

Jay Northcote says

No rating because I proof read. But...

This story is gorgeous. Not to be missed. Con is such a wonderful writer and this book is no exception. I'm so happy to see another release from her :)

Recommended.

Ariana says

2,5 stars

Loved the eye-catching cover.

Loved the original title.

Loved the scenario and how there's a green string of spinach running through the book.

And yet. Sigh. I hate to say it, but that book and me simply never gelled. Maybe I'm turning into a cynic old hag, but virtually all of the characters are a bit 'too ...' much:

Tyler is just a bit too good, too saintly.

Peggy is that tiny portion too sweet, too stereotype of an old dear.

And Jon is a bit too honest, too much a 'goody two shoes'.

I think what I'm trying to say is that these people felt somewhat too nice all in all. And for some reason I had a hard time connecting to them. There is nothing wrong with the MCs, but the spark between them was just a speck of light in a vast universe. And for me, their romance was pushed into second place by Peggy's and Stan and Carl's stories.

The first 45 percent was full of explanations how financial evaluations work. It was boring, sorry. I didn't really need to know THAT much about what Jon did in his job. Particularly when it comes at the cost of the MCs having on page time together.

And as the plot unfolds I kept scratching my head. It is usually not a good sign when What? Why? Never! are at the tip of my tongue again and again. I mean Stan did what to Carl??? That was the one which really had me flabbergasted.

Don't get me wrong: this book isn't badly written, and I would hate to discourage anyone to read it, but it really wasn't for me.

Tess says

4.5 stars

Just lovely.

Chris says

Oh this was SO cute - awwwww Jon & Tyler. I have recently discovered this author and I really like the writing style. There is pace, flow and genuine chemistry between characters. It made me feel happy, a little anxious but really I felt like the cheerleader on the sidelines making sure Jon made the right decision to stay and that Tyler would trust and be saved. This story is not about heat or steamy sex, this is all about the love ! Love for each other, love for Peggy and love for cranky or perky workers ❤️?it was all things warm and beautiful !

Michael Jensen says

Years ago my husband and I coined the term "a\$\$hole fiction." This described the kind of books filled with loathsome characters behaving abominably toward each other. Sadly, back then much gay fiction seemed to be about people who hated themselves doing tons of drugs, having random, meaningless sex and treating everyone around them like dirt.

I HATE stories like that. Yes, conflict is drama, but conflict doesn't have to mean behaving like a selfish jerk.

Case in point, Con Riley's Must Like Spinach. Here is a book where people make mistakes, jump to the wrong conclusion, sometimes do things for the wrong reason, and, well, act like normal people. But these people are also fundamentally decent and are trying to do the right thing as they make their way in the world. It's also touching, heartwarming, and ultimately, affirms my belief in the decency of people.

If that sounds like the kind of book you'd like to curl up with, then start reading it now!

Heather K (dentist in my spare time) says

4.5 stars

I went into this book with NO expectations. My last two Con Riley books were misses for me (True Brit, Recovery), and I haven't that eager to try another book from her. However, After Ben is on my all-time favorites list, so I there is always that little voice pushing me to keep giving Con Riley another go.

I'm so glad I did.

I'd classify this book as **enemies-to-lovers**, for those who like that theme. In truth, this book is **more a lesson in not judging a book by its cover** than anything else, and that theme carries over though most of the relationships in the story, not just with the romance between the two MCs.

What I really, really liked about the story is the **low level of angst**. It really is a simple, **slow-burn romance**. Nothing is rushed, and though there is a lot of focus on the plot, the romance still felt very real to me. I

thought the plotline about Jon finding his place and what he wants to do with his life fit nicely within the vibe of the story.

This is a book for when you are burnt out on high drama, high angst stories. It is almost **soothing** in tone. However, I wouldn't classify this book as light or fluffy. It is simply... nice. **A lovely romance that takes its time to get there.**

I felt happy while reading this one. I read it very quickly, all in one sitting, and I was so relieved to read a romance that felt real and special and didn't rip me to shreds. **Con Riley has a winner on her hands.**

Copy provided by the publisher in exchange for an honest review

? Todd says

While I liked this story quite a bit, I never quite fell head over heels in love with it.

Jon works as a consultant for a high-profile NYC firm whose clients hire them to come in and perform an in-depth investigation into problems that are causing the loss of revenue or productivity, then make a recommendation as to how best to rectify the issue.

While that's all fine and good, the book read almost like a forensic financial accounting mystery to me, with lots of talk about the Seattle company where Jon is sent, with its two misfiring property acquisitions teams. And lots of page time devoted to Jon at work, Jon dealing with office drama or Jon simply thinking about work.

What I truly wanted was a romance, not a mystery (of sorts,) but the entire first 40% of the story wasn't about Jon dancing around his attraction to Tyler. There was little desire to get to know more about one another, to spend time together, even as budding friends. Both MC's had their own almost entirely separate lives, which would occasionally overlap, but not really ever intersect.

Please don't get me wrong, though. The characters were fun and likeable; I'm just not one for a mystery. They really aren't my thing at all.

By around the 50% mark, Jon and Tyler do begin officially dating, much to my liking; however, we still don't see them spending tons of time together on-page. The dates they have are nice and romantic, but I continued to want more actual bonding time, getting to know one another on a deeper level, which wasn't happening due to Tyler's many work commitments.

I did love Peggy, their elderly landlord. The way that she would brag about 'her boys' was very sweet and believable. She was sort of the mother figure that neither MC had in their lives at that point. It was great to feel that she needed them in her life as much as they needed her.

Regarding the big 'mystery' at Jon's work, I sort of felt that the big build-up, after that many pages devoted to it, fell a bit flat and was actually resolved off-page, between two other side characters, so I was a bit

disappointed with that.

Overall, if you enjoy a good mystery (and office politics) and want 'some' romance, without the MC's being the laser focus of the plot, this would definitely be a good one, which I'd recommend.

However, due to my own lack of interest in mysteries, I felt that the "who's the weak link at work?" aspect of the story only distracted from the full court press of a romance that I was hoping for.

3 1/2 stars.

** NOTE: If you do happen to be a hardcore romance fan, you should read Con Riley's "After Ben," which is insanely good. And sad. And wildly romantic. Recommended without an ounce hesitation. :)

My ARC copy of the story was provided by the publisher in exchange for a fair, unbiased review.

Amanda says

Jonathan is a high flying executive consultant from NYC and got a new assignment at Seattle for 3 months. While at Seattle, he came across a rental advert with the caption '**Must Like Spinach**' .

When Jon first met Tyler, he thought Tyler is a sleazy scumbag leeching of the old landlady. Tyler is a busy man and for almost half the book, I hardly saw him on the pages. I find myself thirsting for some tidbits on him.

I must say that this book focus too much on Jon's office drama. It just feels really dry and for someone who was never interested in anything to do with business, I find it entirely confusing. Sorry to admit that I mostly skimmed off the pages whenever Jon's at work.

What I really like to focus on is the relationship development between Jon and Tyler. I enjoy their enemies to lovers angle with Jon not liking Tyler one bit. But once Jon found out Tyler is a sweetheart with a kindred soul, he realize he is wrong about the man.

I really like Jon and Tyler together, I think the things they did together were sweet. I just wish there are more pages dedicated to them, instead of the office.

Karen Wellsbury says

am a big fan of Con Riley's writing, and I was so excited to read this, I loved the blurb and also the cover, and I really like spinach!

Once again, I was not disappointed, this book has so much warmth and love in it that it's like being hugged while you read. Jon is doing a job he really doesn't like, management consultant, for financial reasons. When he get's a short term transfer to Seattle he ends up living with Peggy, a wonderful warm hearted woman, who

already has another lodger called Tyler. When Jon first meets Tyler he makes assumptions about who he is and how he lives his life, basically as he does about a lot of things and people.

Through his love of gardening Jon begins to care about Peggy, and then reevaluate his views of Tyler, and then his views on the company he's in Seattle to evaluate, and ultimately who he is. There is nothing particularly original about the story line, but this book is anything other than ordinary. Con Riley is the master of show not tell, so we take the journey with Jon as he begins to open up to life, the relationship develops slowly and communication happens on the way.

Must Like Spinach avoids the usual cliches, there is no big misunderstanding (which made me so happy) and lots of communication, and a real feeling of a person finding themselves.

Although it didn't detract from my reading pleasure at all, my only real niggle was why it was set in Seattle? As a British writer the story would have worked in the UK on every level. That being said this is a lovely warm and comforting read and highly recommended.

Originally posted at Prism Book Reviews

Ami says

2br – Central Seattle Apt – Cheap, but must like spinach!

Full disclosure, I haven't read any of Con Riley's stories for the past four years. I wasn't happy with her first debut series, and decided to leave it at book #2. Never really interested to pick up her latter ones. Until I saw the title for this. **Must Like Spinach**. An interesting catchy title for an MM romance or what? I was immediately intrigued and then requested the ARC.

I'm glad that I did.

This book starts with Jon being reprimanded for confronting his client by being sent-off from New York all the way to Seattle. Jon must prove himself to his boss that he is still worthy of his job. He needs to make an analysis on what is going wrong with a company called, Hallquist Holdings. At first, things look so perfectly clear for him, but Jon realizes that there are things going on below the surface the longer he stays.

In the meantime, Jon rents a place from a lovely old lady, Peggy, because he thinks that her other tenant, Tyler, is leeching off her. Plus Peggy has a beautiful garden, which reminds Jon of his mother and his childhood.

One joy from reading, in my perspective, is when the story surprises you, takes you to somewhere you don't expect when you open that first page. This is what **Must Like Spinach** gave me. A wondrous journey where Jon (and in that sense, so did I) discovered that sometimes what you see is not all that you get; that people can still surprise you with good intention.

Because Jon then finds out who Tyler really is and why he tells Peggy that she should just sell her place. Jon also learns that the man he deems as the root of the problems at Hallquist Holdings has a lot more to offer,

and that his boss might be hiding a reason that is not at all like Jon expects.

This book was just LOVELY for me – from Riley’s writing (sentences like this: *Want unspools inside like a kite string, lifting his spirits steadily skyward before he’s even made it airside*), to the romance (slow burn, low steam, but with beautiful connection), to the slow uncovering of what has been going on at Hallquist Holdings (I got choked up during the revelation). I thought the love declaration was grand, and the ending perfect.

My only nitpicky complaint would have to do with the plot about Tyler’s ex. I thought it wasn’t fully resolved. I guess I wanted to draw blood and for Danny to pay for what he did.

I guess I must bring back Con Riley to my author-to-watch list for next time :)

A Guest Review for The Blogger Girls

The ARC is provided by the author for an exchange of fair and honest review. No high rating is required for any ARC received.

Bev says

Loved it. So, so good. 4.5 stars from me. A well-written [well duh!! It’s Con], heart-warming and gentle tale, a slow-burn romance and it made me have a smile on my face for most of the read. I <3 Jon and Tyler, Peggy [their elderly matchmaker], and even Stan towards the end, when I discovered the **real** reason he wanted Jon to get Carl ‘fired’.

As for the little *coughs* misunderstanding at the end, well....I don’t suppose you could blame Tyler for jumping to his own ‘way off base’ conclusions when Eric innocently showed him the diagram on the whiteboard at Hallquist; after all, that’s exactly what Jon did when he first met Tyler and assumed HE was after Peggy’s money.

Adam says

3.5 stars

Early on, I had mixed opinions of both Jon and Tyler. Tyler was a bit of a mystery, because we only see him through the negative impressions that Jon has, from whose POV the book is told. But Jon wasn’t winning any points either, with his taciturn attitude.

It isn't until Jon began spending time in the garden that I got to see what was behind the public corporate persona. As much as I dislike gardening in real life, I ended up enjoying when Jon was in his element, because he was able to let his guard down and let his worries fade away.

I'm a sucker for an opposites-attract romance, and Tyler and Jon are certainly two very different men. Jon is well-polished, career-driven, and pretty uptight at the beginning of the book. Tyler is more care-free, taking life as it comes, and chose his career because he loves what does, even if it doesn't pay much.

The one thing that unites them is their care for Peggy, their elderly landlady. Jon and Tyler can put aside their mutual distrust for Peggy, and that's the beginning of their relationship. I really liked seeing how their attitudes towards each other slowly changed, and how they revealed more of themselves to one another bit by bit.

Also, I was a big fan of Peggy and her not-so-subtle maneuvering after she decided that Jon and Tyler would be perfect for each other. She's a sweet old lady who wouldn't hurt a fly, but looks out for her boys.

This is a slow-burn romance, one that only builds in small increments as the book moves along. It was very sweet seeing Jon fall for Tyler little by little, and how his hope that Tyler would reciprocate grew. Tyler does eventually come around and give in to his heart's desire, but it takes a while for him to get there.

By the end, there's no question that Tyler and Jon are deeply in love, and are more than ready to build their future together.

While the romance was slow-paced, what really bogged the book down at times was the focus on Jon's work. I just wasn't a fan of all of the business planning and company politics, particularly because it was given so much page time. It distracted from Tyler and Jon's relationship, so I could have done with much less of it.

Overall, 'Must Like Spinach' is an enjoyable read. If you're looking for a slow-burn and low-drama romance, and don't mind following an MC around in his place of work, I'd give this book a try.

Kade Boehme says

This was SO so good. (But its Con Riley SO expected nothing less) I loved the characters, I loved the pacing, and it was a perfect read for now bc I wasn't in the mood for major angst. It was a laid back escape. Not fluffy, but still so sweet in all the best ways. I felt like I could know these characters and go sit and have coffee with them, and those are my favorite kinds of romance stories.

Simon says

I read this beautiful story while on vacation.....terrible internet connections.....I waited until I returned home and then forgot to review (Bad, bad boy!).

Much as I love Ms Riley's "British" stories, I do prefer her American novels, she writes like a native and I love them.

Light on angst, thank goodness, light on descriptive sex, thank goodness.....great plot, lovely, lovely, gorgeous characters; fabulous writing, story-telling and romance..... what's not to love?

Highly recommended, loved it.

(Forgot to say....Great cover Con. No naked torso, just nicely masculine).

Dia says

3,25 stars

I enjoyed this book, but it moved a little too slow for my taste. I can't say I was bored exactly, but I wanted the action to speed up, especially the relationship between the main characters.

At first I didn't know what was with all the plants analogies. I got excited about Jon's new job in Seattle. My head was spinning with all the new characters, but I got pretty invested into the story. I enjoyed the writing, it threw a sort of melancholy all over the story.

I liked Peggy a lot! She was such a kind and sweet old lady. And Tyler, he was such a sweetie!! At first I was sad we don't get his POV, but I was curious to discover his story. There are a few things I would have loved to know more about, such a Tyler's past.

We get some hot scenes and I'll admit Jon and Tyler are super hot together. It was sweet how they were so tentative at first, but then couldn't keep their hands from the other. Well the hot scenes happen after the first half of the book and I would have wanted the romance to be a bigger part in the story.

We get some surprises, but not enough to make me really love this story. Once again, I think I had too high hopes about the ending. Waiting for a big finale didn't go well because I didn't get it.
