



# Her Summer with the Marine

*Susan Meier*

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*Their competition has never been so irresistible*

The last person Ellie McDermott wanted to run into after returning to her hometown is Finn Donovan, her high school nemesis and the guy she crossed the line from enemies to lovers with one night years ago. Now ex-military, tattooed, and still sexy as hell, Finn is a complication Ellie doesn't need—she needs to concentrate on saving her family business.

Finn's entire life, Ellie was there, going head-to-head with him in every class, bee, and test. So it's no surprise she'd show up just as he was about to take over her father's struggling business. It *is* a surprise, though, that his attraction to her is even more explosive than it had been. Acting on their attraction is one thing, but Finn has to turn a profit to save his own family, and nothing—not even love—will get in his way.

## Her Summer with the Marine Details

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# From Reader Review *Her Summer with the Marine* for online ebook

## AlligatorSmith loves to read says

In the author's biography, it says that "her favorite stories are those that inspire laughter through tears." That is a good way to describe this story. Ellie comes back to town because her father was found in the park during an Alzheimer moment; even though he doesn't recognize her most of the time, one time he does, and he asks her to take over running the family funeral home. Okay, that's a first for me - a heroine in a funeral home. I wasn't turned off, though, because I was already invested in the story. The Marine from the title is Finn, who grew up with Ellie - they were "frenemies" - they both were smarter than all the other kids in school, and they taunted each other as they got ready for each test or contest.

After some hanky-panky at the end of their senior high school year, they lose touch until Ellie comes back to town; she finds that Finn now owns a funeral home in the same \*small\* town! Both characters are dealing with very serious issues related to their families, and that part is heart wrenching. Because they desperately need each of their family's funeral homes to win the town's business, they see each other a lot as they fight to win.

Finn "...[has] the trimmed, toned body of a warrior. The sexily mussed hair of a man who liked to take life easy. The strong, chiseled face of a Greek God. And a voice that could melt butter." AND this ex-Marine rides a motorcycle!

The book's story was unusual. The characters had jobs that I've never seen in a romance before, and they were dealing with family issues that were deeply serious. However, there is laughter, romance, and heart in this story. And...some very sexy scenes as well. I have to admit that I cried in a few parts near the end, and I was rooting for them (and yelling at them) to have their HEA ending. The depth of the story, the idiosyncrasies of the two leads and the many characters around them, and the idea that there CAN be laughter through tears made this a good read for me.

Oh, and I can't wait to read about the other two Donovan brothers.

\*\*Thanks to the author and Entangled/Bliss for the copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.\*\*

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## Crystal says

Former brief (meaning one-time) lovers, competitors all through school and they've been apart 10-years when they meet up during difficult circumstances. All of this make Ellie and Finn's story very, very interesting and *Her Summer with the Marine* an excellent book to read as spring approaches and it feels like love is in the air.

If I went with what I didn't love about this book, there would be very little to write. I thought the writing/story was a little choppy at times, but that did not diminish my enjoyment of the story. It may be more a testament to my life while reading the story than the book itself, so don't let that deter you. Honestly I really enjoyed every second of this book. The characters are fun. Finn is sexy, one of those men that make

women from 12-90 just melt between his looks and his undeniable charm. Ellie is trying to move through life, make something of a career and deal with the guilt that surrounds her and her Dad's situation. Plus she's still trying to get over that night 10 years ago with Finn. Their love/hate/amazing attraction relationship is fun and when they finally give into it, it's enjoyable to watch. Of course there will be that time of difficulty as there is with any romance (have to have conflict) but as with any romance you know they will get their happily ever after, just now how it will happen.

I have to say there were surprises with this book and I look forward to more books by Ms. Meier. I can't wait to read more about Finn's brothers who are just introduced in the book but should make things interesting in the future. I believe this is the first of the Red-Hot Bliss line where the passion is a little hotter than the typical Bliss line and it is. The heat was just right for me and fit the couple in the book. It's sexy and fun and romantic all in one. I like how Ms. Meier went at this romance just a bit different with the lust vs. hate type of relationship and how the couple realizes they really play off each other well. It was fun to watch every second of their relationship and to see each character grow and surprise me.

If you love your romance then this is definitely a book to try. The characters will engage you, the small town enthrall you and the storyline will make you turn pages at a fast clip. *Her Summer with the Marine* is a book that you shouldn't miss and I am so happy I had the chance to review it!

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## Ashley says

Aww! That was SO SWEET! There was lots of crying, but also some good laughs. :) And the chemistry? SCORCHING! I'll put up my full review once it goes live on my blog!

UPDATE: (from my blog [ashleythebookjunkie.blogspot.com](http://ashleythebookjunkie.blogspot.com))

Who knew running a funeral home could be so sexy? (And no, there's nothing morbid or weird going on in this novel.) :)

This book has everything we have come to expect and love about a Bliss title, with the addition of one thing...when the clothes come off, the lights stay on! There is no fade-to-black when they enter the bedroom. And I'll tell you now, these scenes are STEAMY!

Y'all, if I hadn't also been working on a beta read yesterday, I would have finished this book in one sitting! I very much enjoyed it, even if it did make me cry on multiple occasions. Yes, it definitely had its sad moments, but I also laughed, got angry, and altogether had a good time reading it. :-D

Ellie and Finn have been and are going through some tough crap in their lives. Their competition with each other goes all the way back to elementary school...and now extends to trying to beat each other out of the funeral business. What starts as a friendly competition turns into a double-edged sword. They both will do whatever it takes to keep their businesses running, including fighting a little dirty. But their competitiveness gets both of them all hot and bothered. So, they decide that maybe they can keep business and pleasure separate, and enjoy each others' company in the bedroom while maintaining their competition for business outside the bedroom. But as I'm sure you can already tell, there are MANY ways for this plan to go a little awry. :)

Ellie's father is dealing with the final stages of Alzheimer's disease, and Finn's mother has finally agreed to

move out of his abusive father's home, and into his home. So of course, they both have HUGE reasons why they want their own funeral business to STAY in business. Of course, the solution to their problem seemed pretty obvious to me from the beginning of the story, but since they both come from jaded pasts when it comes to love and families, they are blind to this, and immediately dive into the competition of their lives...as well as the affair of their lives!

I don't want to spoil the story for you at all, but I just have to tell you that my favorite part of the whole book has to do with a dunk tank fundraiser...and that's all I'm going to say! ;-D

I LOVE the secondary characters in this book! From the moment I met him in the story, I loved Ellie's dad. He is a great man, dealing with an AWFUL disease. And I should know, as it is something that runs in my family. And then there's Finn's mom. That poor woman. She has been broken in so many ways, but I have to say, by the end of the novel, I was SO proud of her! B. B., what can I say but that even though you think she's the 'blonde bimbo' that everyone makes her out to be, she is so much more than that. And the Dinner Belles, they have their own role to play in this story.

ANYWAY, enough of my chattering on and on, JUST GO READ IT! You will laugh, you will cry, and you'll get to read about Ellie and Finn's SCORCHING chemistry!

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### **Tory Michaels says**

This was a very sweet romance. The non-stop competition between Elli and Finn that has lasted their entire lives remains as heated as ever when Ellie comes back to town to help save the funeral home business her father owns (even though she has no personal desire to own a funeral home herself) when he falls sick. Finn has opened a competing funeral home and when it's a small town, there clearly isn't going to be enough business in town for both to succeed.

Both main characters had incredibly strong reasons to survive and see their business thrive in their town. I loved the competitiveness that led to several interesting ad campaigns. Ellie of course initially has the edge there because she's in ad marketing to begin with (and her marketing job includes marketing for Tidy Whitez....adult diapers).

I found her larger story, with watching her dad go downhill in the final stages of Alzheimer's to be heart-rending, especially at the very end just before the resolution of both the funeral home conflict and the Ellie/Finn romance issue. Having watched my mom with a similar illness, Ms. Meier's characterization of Ellie's dad just about broke my heart with the memories of my mom's struggle with dimension and the very end when you have to make those end-of-life decisions for your loved ones.

Finn's family was no less interesting, with his bully of a father and the mother he and his brothers have finally intervened to help save from an abusive marriage. His final play to gain Ellie's love was very sweet and if I were the type to love over-the-top gestures of love and adoration from my spouse, I wish my husband would do something like what Finn does the next time we're having difficulties resolving an issue between us.

So, I give this a whole-hearted 5-star review. Thanks for a fabulous book, Ms. Meier.

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## Susan says

Very good, very emotional book, with a setting I haven't encountered before - a pair of funeral homes. Ellie works for an ad agency in Pittsburgh and has just been awarded a big account when she gets an emergency call from the police in her hometown. Her father has been found wandering around town, disoriented and taken to the hospital. When she arrives in Harmony Hills, she finds that he has been hiding his Alzheimer's from her. Now he can no longer live alone, but must go to a nursing home, leaving her in charge of the business. She can't just close it because she needs the money for his expenses, but she is also committed to the ad campaign. To make matters worse, she discovers her old school frenemy, Finn, has come home and opened his own funeral home, putting McDermott's in danger.

Finn finished his time in the Marines and came home, ready to face the demons that sent him running after high school. His funeral home is starting to do well, but there's not enough business for two in town, so he is trying to buy out McDermott's. He needs to succeed in order to take care of his mother, and having Ellie show up and take over puts a crimp in his plans.

Ellie and Finn had been competitors all through school, always vying for the top score or position. They were friends of a sort, always able to be themselves with each other. Each of them had issues with their lives in the small town and couldn't wait to leave. Ellie always felt that she was the object of pity and gossip after her mother was killed in a car accident with her lover. Finn is hiding the fact that his highly respected by the town father abuses Finn, his brothers, and their mother. Attraction that had been building between them explodes on a night when Finn came looking for comfort, leaving both unable to deal with the aftermath. Each of them views their encounter in a different way.

Ellie and Finn are thrown back into competition when she agrees to her father's request that she run things. Though they try to keep away from each other, their attraction is stronger than ever. Though each needs to win this competition, they are able to keep it mostly friendly. But each encounter fans the flames of their attraction, until they decide that maybe they can keep business and pleasure separate. Of course, that never works and this is no exception. Though the solution is obvious, their views on relationships have been affected by those of their parents and neither is looking to repeat those mistakes.

I ached for Ellie throughout the book as she tried to deal with her father's rapid decline. It was especially heartbreaking at the end, as she deals with both that and her feelings for Finn. He has his moments of obliviousness that nearly ruin everything before he finally sees the truth. I loved his big moment as he makes his desperate attempt to prove his love to Ellie. It's all wrapped up in an epilogue that shows there's more to their love than just heat.

I loved the secondary characters who added another layer of depth to the story. Ellie's father and the story of how he carried on after his wife's death, and the pain of watching his decline. I loved Finn's mom and seeing her go from broken to strong was fantastic. Ellie's staff at the funeral home were her saviors, and I especially liked BB. Though she seemed to be quite the airhead at the beginning, Ellie quickly discovered there was quite a brain under that hair. The Dinner Belles went from being the source of Ellie's teenage pain to some of her greatest supporters.

There were parts of the book that had me in tears, especially at the end. There were others that had me laughing out loud, most notably the fundraiser and the dunk tank. There were also a couple places that had me fanning myself from the heat coming off the pages. Now I can't wait to read the books for Finn's brothers.

\*copy received from Netgalley in exchange for honest review

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### **Alycia says**

Our first RED-HOT Bliss. Same great Bliss story, but with open door sex. ;) Don't miss it!!

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### **Carol-Ann says**

Absolutely loved this book and Romance story and comedy element also the chemistry between this couple, Ellie McDermott who came back home to look after her father's funeral business as he is ill, The last person she wanted to see was an ex lover with a night many years ago Finn Donovan an Ex-military tattooed and still sexy as hell, Both have always been in competition against each other even through their school years, Both are trying to save their business for their family sake, Their attraction is as strong as ever but they can't let it get in the way of saving their own family and can't let love stand in the way!

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### **Kathleen says**

Review posted at: Swept Away By Romance

Story Rating ~ 5 Stars

Hero Rating ~ 5 Stars

Heroine Rating ~ 5 Stars

Romance Rating ~ 4 Stars

Heat Level ~ 3.5 Stars

Ending ~ 5 Stars

Overall Rating ~ 5 Stars

This story was like no other that I've read before and the originality of the story line blew me away. This story revolves around Ellie and Finn; they have known each other all their lives and were constantly in competition with each other since grade school.

Ellie had to return to her home town to help her father who has Alzheimer's. When she returns she finds out that her dad is in really bad shape and that he has been placed in Harmony Hills nursing home which is very expensive. Ellie has no other choice but to take over her father's funeral home to help pay for his care.

Finn has just recently opened his own funeral home in Harmony Hills. With Harmony Hills being such a small community he knows that two funeral homes in the same town are not going to work. He decides to buy Ellie out to ensure that his business does not fail. Needless to say she turns him down, and the competition between these two to make their funeral homes a success is on.

This story was VERY entertaining and held my interest all the way through. It also grabbed me emotionally on so many levels. I laughed, I smiled and I also sobbed my heart out while reading this book.

I LOVED both Ellie and Finn, they were excellent characters. The back story about these two and their

families was done so well that I was truly captivated by this read.

There were also some VERY STEAMY love scenes; however I would not call them erotic. They were tastefully done, nothing too kinky and added just the right amount of heat.

Near the ending is where my emotions were really drawn into play. My heart was breaking along with Ellie's and I swear I was crying every bit as hard as she was.

I gave the ending 5 stars, because there was an epilogue that wrapped the story up, and Finn and Ellie are finally together.

The one thing that confused me about this book was the title, Her Summer with the Marine. I didn't feel it fit this book at all. OK, Finn was in the Marines, but the story didn't really revolve around that at all. Was it mentioned that he was a Marine? Yes, but only in passing, and it didn't have much to do with the overall story. This is the only thing that didn't work for me.

I highly recommend this book to all romance readers who like original story lines, with excellent characters that draw you in, and compel you to read on. Add in the fact that it's only .99 cents, what are you waiting for?

*\*A copy of the book was provided by Entangled Publishing in exchange for an honest review\**

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## **Guilty Pleasures Book Reviews says**

Slick's review posted on Guilty Pleasures Book Reviews

Review copy provided for an honest review

### **4 STARS**

This is one of those books that defies the old adage "you can't go home again." In Her Summer with the Marine, we see two high school rivals returning home for different reasons both after being chased out of town by demons they'd dealt with for a good part of their lives. Now facing off for business in this small town, these two must deal with their teenage actions that left one feeling used and the other comforted; one parent in a health crisis and the other trying to regain her life, and the undeniable chemistry they have for one another in what seems an impossible situation. This book is not a light and fluffy romance, it deals with some real issues and while the hero and heroine do manage to find their way to one another it's not without a lot of stumbling along the way.

My heart is breaking for Ellie McDermott, the heroine, as she returns home to find that her father has been battling Alzheimer's on his own for no telling how long. Forced to place him in a care facility and run his mortuary business because he's asked her to and he wants her close, she finds herself back in the town where she never quite got over her mother's betrayal and the gossip that followed her death. On top of that the boy turned man she's competed against from elementary school through high school is also back after a stint in



the Marines and has opened up his own mortuary business that is direct competition for her father's business. After taking her virginity all those years ago he's now out to ruin her father's business and while she can't let that happen she also can't deny the attraction she feels for him.

Finn Donovan feels like his life is finally on track. He's back home, he's opened a business that while isn't booming is beginning to make a name for itself, and he's finally gotten his mother out of clutches of his abusive father. Then she comes back to town; the one girl that knows his secret, the one that challenged him his whole life and made him a better Marine because of it, the one woman he find himself utterly attracted to, and the one woman he should stay far away from after he gets her father's business.

I found this book so very interesting because the hero and heroine had such a different view on their past life together and their one sexual encounter. Ellie always saw Finn as an adversary and then as the boy who used her and left. Finn appreciated the way their competition kept his mind off his horrific home life and made him want more. He remembered their one night together with fondness and the feeling that someone actually cared about him. Over the course of their book, they began to see each other in all kinds of new ways and not all of them good but all of them very real. They both are forced to deal with things in their past that have hurt them and through it all they manage to build a friendship that turns into more.

This book touched my soul as I too have a loved one stricken with Alzheimer's and the way it robs you of the person you've loved all of your life. I appreciate the way it was handled and felt the heroine's actions and feelings were very well written. I enjoyed this story despite the many tears I shed because if anything this disease teaches us it's to live each day as it's your last, let go of the past, and make memories now while you can.

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### **Karen says**

[he finds out during an argument with Ellie that she was hurt that he just walked away after she gave him her virginity years ago and instead of realizing what an ass he was he's pissed at her for not believing him about his dad. Seriously?? And it's NEVER addressed. (hide spoiler)]

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### **Sheryl says**

**\*WHEW\* This was so emotional and EXTREMELY HAWT for an Entangled Bliss. ABSOLUTELY enjoyed it and cannot wait for the stories on the other 2 Donovan brothers!!!**

*\*ARC courtesy of Netgalley and Entangled Publishing\**

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### **Crystal~BIG book addict~ says**

Two small town funeral home businesses (morbid, I know) are trying to stay afloat. Finn opened up his funeral home about six months ago. He came back to save his mom from his abusive father and keep her safe. He needs the business to take off to make sure that happens. He wants to buy out McDermott's Funeral Home, ran by Mark McDermott.

## ***Finn***

Unfortunately, Mark has Alzheimer's disease and his daughter, Ellie, has come home to help take care of him. Mark wants her to run the business side of things as he has everything else taken care of. Ellie will do anything to make her father happy so she agrees. Plus, she needs the extra income to cover the medical cost of his care.

## ***Ellie***

Finn and Ellie have been competing against each other since grade school. One night when they were 17, Finn confides in Ellie about all of the troubles he has been having at home. That night, she gave him her virginity. The next day, he acted like she wasn't even there. Definitely a small grudge is being held 9 years later.

Can Ellie and Finn keep their competition just business or will it lead to something more pleasurable?

This was a nice read. I had a hard time feeling a connection between the characters maybe because they spent so much time apart in the book. Not sure what it was, but it was still an enjoyable read.

*ARC provided by NetGalley in exchange for an honest review*

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## **Char (1RadReader59) says**

How many times have you said, "If only?" or wish, "If only things could have happened differently." Or, "If we could have a, do over." Would you? Or you thought things were one way but they weren't? This story is that.

This is one deep book. OMG! You laugh and cry during it. Yet, it is so worth every tissue and tear it. This author really knows how to grip you in the depth of your emotions to feel the characters pain and joys. Ellie McDermott is called home to Harmony Hills, Penn. By the Chief of Police. Her dear widowed father was found wandering in the park across the street naked. Ellie leaves her life as an ad agent in Pittsburg with not a thought to get to her father.

It turns out he has Alzheimer's and will need long term care. Ellie has some major decisions to make, you see her dad owns McDermott's Mortuary. Before the sun had really set that first day Finn Donovan comes a calling.

Who's he you ask? Finn is only the man who was the boy who competed with Ellie for every quiz, contest,

or award since grade school. He was also the guy who deflowered her. Now, he sees that the opportunity has opened up for him to make a move on her dad's business and he does. Why? Why, would he want it and can't she run it and will she need the steady income from it to help take care of her dad?

But, could she ever sell it to the man who stole the most prized gift a woman has? Especially, without ever looking back or talking to her again until now? Surprisingly it can be resolved and there is a HEA. But don't expect it to be smooth sailing it is bumpy and there will be a lot of tears at least there were for me. Very good story that I gave 5 stars.

Provided by netgalley.com

Find us on: [www.1rad-readerreviews.com](http://www.1rad-readerreviews.com)

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## **Larissa says**

Her Summer with the Marine is a fun, sexy frenemies to lovers story. Ellie McDermott has to move home and take over the family funeral parlor because of her dad's worsening Alzheimer's. Finn Donovan, the guy she competed with all through school, and who she had one night with, has also returned to town and opened a funeral parlor.

And there isn't enough business in this small town for both of them.

This story is so sweet and fun, I can't even tell you. I LOVED the tension from the fact that both characters had a NEED for their business to succeed. And you want both of them to succeed, even though it's not possible.

And then there's the romance. They both have feelings for each other, or at least desires, but they are competing for their lives (or the lives of their parents, really). The tension this causes is spectacular, and when they give in to their desires, the scenes are HOT! Bliss readers who have been looking for a little more steam will be thoroughly satisfied. And readers who love a small town, enemies (or frenemies) to lovers story, will be in heaven.

4.5 stars.

The publisher provided me with an ARC in exchange for an honest review.

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## **Sandra says**

When I figured out the setting were two funeral homes and the two main characters Ellie and Finn are dealing with heavy family issues and competing for customers, I was a bit shocked. But the saucy story line between the two high school rivals made me laugh and the writing was flirty and fun and when the characters dealt with family issues they supported each other.

I loved the delicate story line about death and advertising for customers and then they decide to have fun with each other sexually and give in to their chemistry. The end of the book had me crying while Ellie had to lean on friends when her family issues reached a breaking point. I loved the way Finn comes back into her good graces and shows her he loves her and the plot came full circle!

I would love to read MORE about this family friendly town and maybe Finn's brothers need to be in a future

book!

I received an advanced reading copy of this book in exchange for my honest review.

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