



The Bourbon Kings

J.R. Ward

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For generations, the Bradford family has worn the mantle of kings of the bourbon capital of the world. Their sustained wealth has afforded them prestige and privilege—as well as a hard-won division of class on their sprawling estate, Easterly. Upstairs, a dynasty that by all appearances plays by the rules of good fortune and good taste. Downstairs, the staff who work tirelessly to maintain the impeccable Bradford facade. And never the twain shall meet.

For Lizzie King, Easterly's head gardener, crossing that divide nearly ruined her life. Falling in love with Tulane, the prodigal son of the bourbon dynasty, was nothing that she intended or wanted—and their bitter breakup only served to prove her instincts were right. Now, after two years of staying away, Tulane is finally coming home again, and he is bringing the past with him. No one will be left unmarked: not Tulane's beautiful and ruthless wife; not his older brother, whose bitterness and bad blood know no bounds; and especially not the ironfisted Bradford patriarch, a man with few morals, fewer scruples, and many, many terrible secrets.

As family tensions—professional and intimately private—ignite, Easterly and all its inhabitants are thrown into the grips of an irrevocable transformation, and only the cunning will survive.

The Bourbon Kings Details

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From Reader Review The Bourbon Kings for online ebook

Emily May says

“Everybody’s interested in me.”

“Not him.” Jeff Stern, the host and roommate, tossed in a thousand dollars’ worth of chips. “Ain’t that right, Lane?”

“Are you gay? Is he gay?”

Lane moved the queen of hearts next to the king of hearts. Shifted the jack next to the queen. Wanted to push the boob job with mouth onto the floor.”

I actually hated this book. I'm not even trying to be dramatic - I HATED it.

Even though Ward's Black Dagger Brotherhood series was a little cliche and more than a little repetitive after a while, I confess to quite enjoying it. Especially the earlier books. So when I heard that she'd moved away from vampires and turned to Southern family drama for her latest series, I was ready to settle into an entertaining - if not mind-blowing - read.

But not only was this book one big cheesy cliche after another, I just despised the characters, found the sexual chemistry completely absent, and was a little uncomfortable - almost offended - in parts.

Firstly, though, **how many times do I have to read this story?:**

A rich, gorgeous and arrogant guy has fake-boobed, dyed-haired "bimbos" throwing themselves at him, but he is uninterested and too good for these dehumanized women. Yes, that's right - dehumanized into descriptions of their clothes and plastic surgery. Or referred to like this:

“Lane sat back and addressed the fool that had brought the chatty accessory.”

Yeah, that chatty accessory is indeed a woman.

This rich dude, however, only wants a nice girl - a Mary Sue who doesn't wear make-up or have surgical enhancements:

“Her face was free of makeup, the skin tanned and glowing, the bone structure reminding him that good genetics were better than a hundred thousand dollars’ of plastic surgery.”

Plus, Lane - the guy in question - is pretty much a rude dick to everyone he doesn't want to fuck. Is it supposed to be sexy when he talks down to and rudely dismisses the staff in his family home? He also has a wife who is a racist piece of shit, which is used to justify him threatening to beat her:

“Don’t be ridiculous. Besides, she’s black— ”

Lane grabbed Chantal’s arm and yanked her up close. “Don’t you ever talk about her with that kind of attitude. I’ve never hit a woman before, but I guarantee I will beat the shit out of you if you disrespect her.”

I honestly don't even know how to feel about that exchange. Should I hate her for being racist? Or hate him for being abusive? In truth, I just couldn't stand either of them.

The whole story is supposed to be about Lane meeting his old flame - Lizzie - after years apart. They could not be together because he is heir to a huge Bourbon empire and she's one of the gardeners. But now she's back and old emotions resurface (etc., etc.) and both of them must try to resist the pull of their pasts.

Now, I admit that there's something really sexy about old lovers with unsolved angst meeting up again. But Ward manages to drain every bit of excitement out of it. There is no build-up, no tension; even the supposed obstacles feel contrived and unrealistic.

This isn't unique to Ward's work, though. It seems to be the modern thing - happening in almost every NA romance I read. Does no one want a slow build of chemistry and tension anymore? Do readers only want instant gratification? Erections popping up and juices flowing as soon as they set eyes on one another? Am I one of a small few who is turned off by this?

Maybe. I don't know. I only know that this book was a mess. And it didn't even manage to be entertaining.

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Naoms says

Originally Posted at: Confessions of an Opinionated Book Geek

Loudly, before a single note about the book, the synopsis for The Bourbon Kings says “from the author of The Black Dagger Brotherhood series” and I get it. BDB is a popular series of 13 published books, a spin-off on the way and a rabid fandom that included myself. But, the truth of the matter is that fans of BDB this book was not written for us.

The Bourbon Kings reminds me of that TV show from the 80s that my grandmother and mom used to watch about a rich and powerful oil family from Texas. Basically, it's a soap opera. With over the top situations and twists seen from up the block, around the corner and through the bend. This book is convoluted, melodramatic, and at parts, offensive.

Lane made a mistake, he married the wrong woman. It takes him a few years, an accident of his beloved black servant and a couple glasses of bourbon for him to finally get off his ass and do something about it. He returns home to see his beloved Miss Aurora and to finally set things right. It's been many years since he's touched foot on his family estate, the entirety of his marriage really and he's unsurprised to find nothing changed. His mother is still reclusive, his father is still a douche, his sister a caricature and his wife a bitch. His Gardner, and spurned lover Lizzie is still working for his family despite the fact that he told her he loved her the day before his wedding was announced in the papers.

Soap opera.

I found myself doing the unthinkable and skimming through this book. I just wanted to see if all my predictions came true in the end. It did. There is not an original thought or storyline in this book. Like most books by this author The Bourbon Kings is long. Too long. Why was it so long?

This book lacks some important aspects that Ward is famous for. 1. Sexy men who you want to take care of but hide behind when danger comes cuz they are bad as fuck. 2. Strong female characters who are

comfortable in their sexuality but not over the top and manage to be feminine even as they are tough. 3. A complex story with twists and turns where you understand both characters even as they miscommunicate.

The only thing I will say that TBK has over Ward's popular vampire series is that the characters speak like adult males and not pubescent teenage boys that don't understand that hip hop isn't just a way of dress.

I did not like the characters. I didn't like Lane for being a douche and taking too long to fix his issues. I didn't like Lizzie, because she was dumb enough to still love him after he stomped all over her heart. I didn't like Gin because she used her body to manipulate people. I didn't like Samuel T because he used his body to manipulate people.

These two also have the sickest ever relationship where they one-up each other in an attempt to hurt the other. If Samuel has sex with Gin's friend, Gin will have sex with Samuel's brother and make sure that Samuel sees. They will seduce innocent bystanders in the game between them and then they hurt each other just for the pure pleasure of having the last laugh...But, they're like in love and are meant for each other.....

And of course then there is Miss Aurora the only character of color in this book who spends her days cooking for this white family and her nights praying for this white family with no sign of having a life or family of her own. It wasn't enough for JR Ward to appropriate black culture with her hip hop loving, slang speaking brothers in the BDB series, now she has written a veritable Aunt Jemima whose entire life is lived for and in service to her white masters.

Why are white authors still writing characters like this? Is this how you view us? Are we just here to serve, protect and love you?

This book is so bad it ruined The Black Dagger Brotherhood series for me. I've been struggling through the series for the last few years as it got long winded. But, after reading this book I've decided not to waste my time on her books anymore. I'm just not impressed by her writing, by how predictable her stories are, how she appropriates black culture, and how she keeps going and going just because she can.

UniquelyMoi ~ BlithelyBookish says

No star rating - I'm DNFing this one.

Normally I adore JR WARD's storytelling and I've never DNF'd one of her books, until now. One might assume I DNF'd this one because of the genre, but that's not the case here. In fact, I loved her earlier contemporary romances written as Jessica Bird and can't wait for some of those stories to continue. Not holding my breath, though...

So, what's the problem, you ask? Well, here's my take on this first installment of *The Bourbon Kings...*

First, let it be known that I went into this story with no 'high expectations' so that's not the issue. Honestly, the short and bittersweet of it...it just didn't draw me in. The world JR WARD created just didn't do it for me. I wasn't a fan of the night time soap opera, *Dynasty*, and couldn't give a frog's fat ass who shot J.R. Other

than the narrator's luscious voice there was nothing to keep me invested, nothing that had me excited about - or mildly interested in - continuing.

And that kinda breaks my heart.

As a rule I don't rate stories unless I read more than 50%, and I didn't make it that far into *The Bourbon Kings*. When book 2 comes along, and if it can be read as a standalone story, I'll give it a shot. This is the WARDen, afterall.

♥Rachel♥ says

4.5 stars.

If I had to use one word to describe **The Bourbon Kings** it would be: *addictive*. The story centers on the Brandford/Baldwine family, who are old-money rich and Kentucky's equivalent to royalty. I think the comparisons to the nighttime soaps of the 80's like *Dynasty* and *Dallas* are apt, because each chapter ends on a hook so that I felt completely compelled to keep going to find out what happened next!

Jonathan Tulane Baldwine or Lane, as he's nicknamed, fell hard for Lizzie King, head horticulturist of his family's estate. Unfortunately, rotten circumstances pulled Lane and Lizzie apart, and Lane's stayed away for two long years. With his "mama" sick, Lane rushes home to see her, knowing he'll have to deal with his estranged wife, Chantal, as well as Lizzie, the woman he's never stopped loving. Lane is prepared to set things right this time, and win back Lizzie for good. Lizzie is rightfully cautious, as her heart was shattered two years ago, but she can't deny the powerful feelings she still has for Lane.

Lane and Lizzie's romance sizzled off the pages, and tugged at my heart! It hurts when a love that's so right is derailed. I desperately wanted things to work out for them. I also wanted Lane's spoiled witch of a wife, Chantal, to take a long walk off a short bridge! I was happy, though, that she didn't present as much of a problem as I thought she would, because I stress out of this kind of romantic drama! I didn't want Lane vacillating between these two women and *thankfully* from the very start there was only one woman for him: Lizzie.

While Lane and Lizzie are the romantic focus, there are other stories and romances going on as well. Edward's story, the oldest Baldwine brother, really moved me. From a young age Edward was a brilliant business man, and it was thought he'd take over as head of Bradford Bourbon Company. But he's separated himself from the family, refusing to be anywhere near his father, William, after surviving a kidnapping/hostage situation that left him a broken man. Instead Edward passes his days building up the family's equine (race horses) business, and drinking. There is a history, more like unrequited love, between Sutton Smythe, the heir to Smythe Distillery and chief competitor of Bradford Bourbon, and Edward. I am totally rooting for Edward and Sutton! I can only hope that Shelby doesn't become a love interest for Edward, as well, turning this whole thing into a love triangle! Please don't do it Ms. Ward!

At first, I had a hard time feeling sorry for, Gin Baldwine, Lane's sister. Her actions were so selfish! From the way Gin treated her daughter, Amelia, to the way she treated men just ticked me off. Yes, her daddy's an asshole, (understatement!) and I wouldn't want to marry a man my father insisted I did to bail out the family's finances, but Gin went through life taking, taking and taking. She didn't use the advantages her

privileged life afforded her to make herself a better person, and stand on her own. Grow up Gin! You didn't like how your parents raised you? Then why are you raising your daughter the same way?!

There is a lot of messy, ugly baggage between Gin and Samuel T., her one true love in life. Their timing truly sucked. I really, really hope they get their HEA. I have a feeling Gin has a world of hurt and torture coming her way with the decisions she's made. Gin has potential for some real character growth and I hope to see it in the coming books. I do love it when an author manages to turn my feelings around on a pretty unlikable character.

As a side note, where the heck is Max Baldwin?! Just another piece missing in this intricate family puzzle.

J.R. Ward started **The Bourbon Kings** off with a bang! The story was thoroughly unputdownable! Secrets, murder, lies, manipulations, and romantic entanglements abound. There is so much going on, and every single piece was riveting! I'm dying to get my hands on the next book!

A copy was kindly provided by NAL in exchange for an honest review.

Kelly (and the Book Boar) says

Find all of my reviews at: <http://52bookminimum.blogspot.com/>

Be forewarned. This review????

For approximately 152,847 years my GR friends have been trying to get me to read *The Black Dagger Brotherhood* series. Since I am terrified of all of my friends here I've stayed far far away so they won't hurt me if I hate it (I have already failed them once with Darkfever). This one popped up on the library's "recommended you to since it's been a minute since you read some trash" window and I took the bait like a good little fish. And let me tell you, things went *swimmingly* (see what I did there?).

First things first: This book is probably terrible. There's a chance you have to be a dinosaur to truly appreciate the beauty of this epic family tale. Lucky for me I was born in the Mesozoic Era! When I was a wee little girl my most favorite thing to do on Friday nights was have a sleepover at my Grandma and Grandpa's house where we would all gather 'round the ginormous 19 inch television set in order to watch . . .

I dreamed of the day when I would be able to kick the dust off of my smalltown life and get whisked away to a place like Southfork in order to rule the place with an iron fist like I just knew I was destined to do. And while the Bradford family made their money in bourbon rather than oil, this was just as delicious as my old favorite primetime soap and I ate the damn thing right up. So much so that I was practically screaming down the hallway about how much fun I was having during my lunch hour while I was reading it. Of course, since 99% of the people around me are fetuses, their reaction was sort of like . . .

If you grew up on the guilty pleasures which were *Dallas* or *Dynasty* or *Falcon Crest* or *Knot's Landing*, there's a solid chance this might work for you too. It had all of the money, the sex, the secrets and the dialogue those provided. Stuff like . . .

“You are a bastard.”

“Not according to the dictionary. My parents were well and truly married when I was conceived.” He cocked a brow. “Which I don’t believe you can say about your own daughter, can you.”

Really, the only thing it needed more of was this . . .

There is a solid chance that I'll return to this series for the next book. I mean I just **have** to know what the deal is with Max, right? And Edward. Poor broken Edward. This whole damn family, man . . .

Laura says

| ARC kindly provided by NAL via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. Thank you a lot! |

|4.6 stars|

Blurb: *For generations, the Bradford family has worn the mantle of kings of the bourbon capital of the world. Their sustained wealth has afforded them prestige and privilege—as well as a hard-won division of class on their sprawling estate, Easterly. Upstairs, a dynasty that by all appearances plays by the rules of good fortune and good taste. Downstairs, the staff who work tirelessly to maintain the impeccable Bradford facade. And never the twain shall meet.*

For Lizzie King, Easterly’s head gardener, crossing that divide nearly ruined her life. Falling in love with Tulane, the prodigal son of the bourbon dynasty, was nothing that she intended or wanted—and their bitter breakup only served to prove her instincts were right. Now, after two years of staying away, Tulane is finally coming home again, and he is bringing the past with him. No one will be left unmarked: not Tulane’s beautiful and ruthless wife; not his older brother, whose bitterness and bad blood know no bounds; and especially not the ironfisted Bradford patriarch, a man with few morals, fewer scruples, and many, many terrible secrets.

As family tensions—professional and intimately private—ignite, Easterly and all its inhabitants are thrown into the grips of an irrevocable transformation, and only the cunning will survive.

I won't lie, guys, there are *a lot* of things going on in this book.

I've come to realize that this is the kind of story you will love or hate. It could be all full of clichés or it'll be a brand new adventure for you. I'm in the amazing side of things and I have only good stuff to say about this book.

Gosh, I don't even know where I should start.

After reading this book I was like "man, I'm glad I'm not rich" because, hell, that was pretty messed up.
Totally dodged the bullet.

Get it? LOL... kay, I suck at joking.

The story follows the children of this new generation of the Bradford family. There are three men: Edward, Maxwell and Tulane, and the woman, Virginia... Gin, if you like. They're all messed up, yeah? But we don't actually see Max in this book, only flashbacks.

The main thing here is that Lane wants to get his old love, Lizzie King, back but he also has to try to do things right and make amends but his family gets in between. Well, more like his father and his businesses get in between.

I really have to say I was more invested in the side characters rather than in our MCs but hey, their storylines were *very* good.

Here we have Edward, right heir to the Bradford Empire, yes? We're told ~~shown~~ this man was once full of life and he was smart as fuck and ruthless when it came to business but also gentle and good person. We see glimpses of that but this Edward? This is a very broken man, a weak shadow of the person who used to be. After the events of his kidnapping and torturing, well, how can you be whole? The scars are not only on his body but he is a living reminder of what was done to his persona. He's become an addict-an alcoholic, a loner and a prostitute user.

His character was so interesting, I think he was the one I enjoyed reading the most.

I liked every aspect of his personality, I'm not saying that he was right about how he was dealing with his life but I can tell you I understand the whys. I even liked that he had a crush (*Was he madly in love?*) on Sutton Smythe, heir to Sutton Destillery a.k.a. Bradford's "enemy".

I liked Sutton, I truly did but she and Edward don't work for me. I rather they end up as friends but something tells me they're endgame. Would I be okay with that? Yeah, I guess. Do I have another person in mind for our broken guy? Hell yes.

Guys, meet Shelby Landis.

She's the daughter of the man who got Edward back on tracks. Jeb Landis told her daughter to go find Edward when he died. Since Edward owed the man, he got Shelby a job and a place to live while she works with his horses.

I really loved her character, even though there was little of her in the book.

“I’m not lookin’ for no handouts. I need a place to stay and work to do. I’m good with horses, just like my father, and bad with people— so you’re warned up front on that one. I got no money, but my back is strong and I’m not afraid of nothing. When can I start.”

That's how she was. She was blunt and she didn't give a shit whether she could hurt Edward's feelings and she gained his and my respect. I think that's exactly what he needed after all this time. No pity looks but someone who treated him like a regular alcoholic dude.

I'd like to read more about her in the following book and I'd love for them to be together even though she's 22 and he's almost 40 or past 40. I don't care, really. Or at least I want them to grow closer and closer because there's some serious potential awesome friendship there.

Those two were my favorites, what can I say.

Now, back to our MCs...

I had a bit of a hard time liking Lane. I mean, he was a sweetheart, yes. He was sexy as fuck, yes. He had honor, yes but I just don't know. We really didn't hit it off.

He used to be a bad boy two years before the events happening here and there was already a story created between him and Lizzie so maybe that's why I couldn't fall in love with them.

I'd say I know Lizzie better than I know Lane but still, I was almost done with the book and I still couldn't say I knew for sure who they were.

I’m not saying that I know Edward and Shelby and Sutton like the palm of my hand but I like them more so that helps.

Lizzie is a really strong independent woman (*Don’t you think we say this a lot? “she’s such a strong, independent woman...” like it’s a rarity in this world. Why don’t we say “he’s such a strong, independent man...”? I feel rather annoyed with this. It’s not Ward’s fault but just the thing in general. We have to educate ourselves and women that being strong, capable and independent are not ultimate qualities to conquer and show off and to attract people but adjectives to describe us because that’s what we are, not what we got to be.*) who works for Lane's family. Now, I don't think I'd be working for the family of the man who left me to marry other woman (I know, I know what happened but she did not know) because, on top of that, I'd be working for that woman too. That's self-torture, Lizzie.

She's a really good person and she wants to finish the payments of her farm and all of that but I would have found another place to work.

Anyhow, I liked the girl but that was it. Y'all know honest-to-God-pure-of-hearts characters and I don't get along well so maybe that's why she wasn't my favorite? And honestly I didn't really care about her and Lane. If the two of them had managed to make a good impression as a couple, I'd have root for them but I felt like I was reading just part of their story and not the most interesting part.

With that being said, I still want to read more about them because I want to give them another chance because of what happened with Chantal, Lane's wife *ex-wife*, well, I couldn't appreciate them.

Now, the deal with Gin is a whole different thing.

She's the party girl. The woman who makes terrible decisions and is often humiliated. She's also the manipulative kind of woman.

She has no advance education and she lives off her family money. Yep, she's the typical spoiled heir.

I have to say I somehow care about her. It's hard not to, really. I didn't want to because I just hate this type of person but Gin isn't cruel nor a despicable villain. Her survival instincts are just strong enough to move mountains and that's, uhm, something great.

Her relationship with Samuel T. is something I don't think it'd work. Ever. They go back and forth with this sex fest they have and I could understand why they kept their relationship but I just think it's a bit way too sick to me. Granted, they care about each other but they haven't been adults in the situation. They're not teenagers anymore and the way they behave is just beyond stupid at times.

It was entertaining for sure but, in the end, it's not healthy for anyone and now that Gin has made up her mind, well, she chose her well-being first.

Like I said, it's hard not to sympathize with her and I know everything will come back and bite her ass.

After much introspection, she had come to acknowledge a fundamental truth about herself: She couldn't survive in any other world. And Richard could give her this lifestyle she needed—even as her family might no longer be able to. It was going to cost her, apparently . . . but she had lost her self-respect years ago. To sacrifice her body at the altar of money? Fine. She would do what she had to.

I mean, yeah, I should totally hate the woman but I haven't been able to.

I've found TBK more than entertaining and I enjoyed reading it so much. I love when I jump from conclusion to conclusion. Sometimes I spoiled myself but it is too fun.

I liked the villain, Lane's father, but I wish we could have more of him. We all see his evil acts for afar or just the results and I really wanted to see him in action. I mean, being the complete SOB that he was.

Guys, I like me some refined evil minds and on top of that the man was a total asshole so I'd want to read about him and despise the living shit out of that bastard.

I hope we get that in book two. (view spoiler)

This is rather slow paced book and sometimes it can be a bit too slow but I loved every second of it. The setting was great and this is the first time I read this particular kind of plot. It reminds me of *Dallas* and I only watched like 5 episodes but I love the secrets, conspiracy, the dead bodies pile getting higher and higher...

Now I have huge expectations for the second book and this is what I think it would **wish** happen.

(view spoiler)

The thing is, you either love the book or you don't. I'm a fan already.

Shawna says

1 – Big Disappointment stars

- Uber annoying audiobook narrator
- Over-the-top
- Melodramatic
- Dynasty/Dallas-esque soap opera theatrics
- Appalling, annoying characters
- What happened to the 'romance'?
- Too many characters and multiple POVs to keep up with
- Dissatisfying, unresolved, abrupt ending

Amy (Foxy) says

TWO POINT SEVEN-FIVE STARS

Well, I'm not sure if my lack of 'loving' this book is because I listened to it instead of reading it **or** if this book just didn't grab my attention. Either way I did listen to all 13 hours of it because I'm OCD like that. *lol*

In true Ward form - she created an interesting secondary story lines that will most likely have me reading the future books in the series to see what happens.

The Bourbon Kings reads like a 1980's night-time soap opera set in modern times. As a child I didn't get to watch soaps but I did watch some in college. *They're addicting!* *lol*

SERIES:

The Angel's Share
Continuing story

~IreneOust~ says

I am done. I am also sleep deprived, emotionally drained AND nursing ONE HELL OF A BOOK HANGOVER but I REGRET NOTHING!!

I don't have *much* to add to the stuff I said in my '*half way thoughts*' below but I'll say this:

This book ... THIS BOOK! It is so opulent! So full of lies, deceit and love connections that are so beautiful and heartbreaking at times. The plot kept me on the edge of my seat and the ending/preview of what's to come is making me want to get my hands on the sequel IMMEDIATELY!

The events in this book take place over the span of one weekend yet I feel like I've lived a thousand lives with these characters. The way J.R. Ward gives you their backstory is absolutely brilliant! I honestly feel like I just finished a series of novels that told a story of each one.

It's hard to pick what I loved the most about 'The Bourbon Kings' but the dynamic between the siblings, Lane's relationship with Miss Aurora & Samuel T. & Gin's twisted game of hearts are all up there, among some of my favorite moments.

I LOVED every minute of this family saga and can't wait to continue! I am also glad that I decided to read this NOW, with book 2 being only a few weeks away, vs back when this novel was first released because I wouldn't have been able to wait an entire year for Part II!

This is an absolute MUST READ for anyone who appreciates exceptional family drama with a twist!
ABSOLUTELY BRILLIANT! From start to finish!

'Half way' thoughts:

I've only done this once before - pause half way to rate and write a review for book I am currently reading because it's so overwhelmingly good and I just can't keep all the feels inside me so here goes ...

I've fallen head over heels in love with a book. I am talking truly, madly, deeply IN LOVE! OK, maybe it's not the first time [and probably won't be the last] but some books manage to get under my skin and make me realize that I've stumbled onto something truly special from pretty much page one and 'The Bourbon Kings' just happens to be one of those books. There are very few authors whose work consumes me to the point that everything around me seizes to exist. JR Ward is doing just that with this incredible story. I don't think I've yet to read a story that had so many layers! Not to mention ALL the complex and fascinating characters this book is filled with! It's like I manage to gasp at *something* at the end of almost every paragraph.

The writing is incredible and so vivid that when you don't feel as if you are actually THERE, with the characters, you feel like you are watching a brilliant TV drama unfold and, luckily, you don't have to wait till the next episode to find out what happens ... all you have to do is flip the page and go onto the next chapter!

Books such as this one is the reason why I love to read! Nothing beats losing yourself in a story that takes your breath away, makes you speechless, keeps you up till the wee hours of the morning and has you thinking about nothing BUT what's going to happen next all day! I am a sucker when it comes to family sagas and this book exceeded EVERY. SINGLE. EXPECTATION! and then some (and I am only 44% in!).

I think I feel a little better that I got all this off my chest so I am off to try and finish this amazing story! And, as much as I want to get to the end, I am not quite ready for this story to be over just yet. This is DEFINITELY going into my 'reread' pile because HOW CAN YOU NOT???

Cheers!

Jacqueline's Reads says

NOW LIVE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

5 Bourbon Neat Stars Please

Bourbon Kings is part of the Bourbon Kings series, it can be read as a standalone, but like I said, it's also a part of a series.

I'm a mega fan of J.R. Ward and when I heard about The Bourbon Kings I think my panties got wet (just a little bit). If you are a fan of the Black Dagger Brotherhood series, just know that The Bourbon Kings has the same writing style, but it's nothing like the paranormal BDB series.

The Bourbon Kings has mixed reviews and it's because of two things (the only thing I can think of). The book is not focused on one main couple. The story is about the Bradford siblings. There are four of them, Max (who isn't in the story, but is mentioned) Edward the eldest, Lane and Gin (the sister). The "main" couple is Lane and Lizzie, but a huge chunk of the book includes, Edward, Gin, Stephen T (the family lawyer), Sutton (heiress to a competing competitor) and Shelby (a staff member).

The “main” couple is Lane and Lizzie (she works on the flower arrangements for the family and has been for over ten years), but like I said there’s a huge chunk of the book that includes the other siblings. Just my two cents, I loved this. Because J.R. Ward included the other siblings, I felt like the story moved fairly quickly and there was PLENTY of stuff to keep me happy. Also, I felt like I was getting a solid foundation on every character (each have their vices).

- Lane and Lizzie’s Story -

Lizzie has worked for the family for a long time. When she was just hired, Lane was in college. They had a short fling that ended badly (you will find out why, but I think it’s best to leave it as a surprise). When the fling ended, Lane went away for two years and now he is back. Lizzie still loves Lane, but he hurt her badly. It’s really bad in my opinion and you feel for Lizzie. Lane tries to redeem himself and he wants to make it right with Lizzie because he still cares for her.

You’re the love of my life, whether you’re with me or not

It matters... this matters to me even more than my family. Do you hear me, Lizzie? You have always, and will always, matter most to me

I loved Lane and Lizzie’s story. It’s so tortured and so dramatic. I was just consumed by the problems and I wanted them to fight, make-up and have steamy you know what. Lane tries really hard to win Lizzie back and I love it when the Hero chases the Heroine. You also feel for Lane. Lane is a complex character, he has major daddy issues. Lane is kind of the butter to the family. He keeps everyone together and he has a lot on his shoulders. He’s the guy you go to fix problems.

- Gin and Samuel T. and other people -

Gin is the sister and she is a spoiled princess. She doesn’t have any empathy and she spends her days shopping and having relations with anyone she wants, married or not. When you first meet Gin, it’s really hard to like her. She basically is self-centered and really mean. BUT I have a soft spot for these girls. They are the way they are for a reason and Gin has her reasons.

Samuel T is the family’s lawyer. He grew up with the siblings so don’t think he’s the creepy old guy. He’s good friends with Lane and he’s helping Lane with some problems. Samuel and Gin have a past. They have a very abusive and explosive relationship that I am just addicted to reading! If you could think of a love/hate kind of relationship, they are it. They are all about hurting and using each other.

I really enjoyed reading the small parts with Gin and Sam, I found them fascinating and completely different from Lizzie and Lane. I liked how dark their story was and I loved the direction J.R. Ward was taking them.

- Edward / Sutton / and maybe Shelby -

Edward is the oldest and he's story is the saddest. I don't want to give anything away, but some stuff has happened to him in the past that has forever changed Edward's outlook on life. He's basically just a shell of a person and you can see his self-destruction. I really liked Edward's story because you just couldn't help, but want to cry for him and give him a big hug. He, like Lane, has daddy issues too and it has left him with many open wounds.

Sutton is the heiress to a competing competitor (her family and the Bradford's have be rivals, they are both successful). Sutton is introduced a little towards the middle of the book and her story is adorable. I really like Sutton and she's the kind of girl you want to be friends with. Her interaction between Edward is minimal but it's really important to the story. That's all you are getting from me.

Shelby is a mystery to me and I am not sure what role she plays in the book, but I do like her, even though I am confused by her presence. I have a feeling there's something big that will happen in the future books with her.

My thoughts...

I am not sure if you wanted to read about each character, but it's was the easiest way for me to break down the story. What really worked for me is how every character interacted with each other. It's not a book that is broken up by three couples, no, each person is somehow related to another person and they all have a story kind of woven together. That right there made the book for me.

Some people wonder if there are too many characters to follow and my answer to you is no. J.R. Ward writes in a way that is easy to follow along and is completely captivating. I may be a little biased because I married a Southerner (yes, including southern accent) so all of this is something I understand. It's all about how you are presented towards the outside, but not everything is what it seems.

There are some negative comments about the "romance" in the book. Let me tell you here, it's not an overly "romantic" book, but there's plenty of "love" if that makes sense. The thing is, these characters are so messed-up, confused and have major chips on their shoulders, it's hard for them to "love", but they do have passion, lust and high emotions. There was plenty of tension to keep you happy, so do not be let down by the few steamy scenes there are in the book. Because, just like J.R. Ward fashion, when she does write a steamy scene, it counts and in a major way.

Finally, there is a main major plot in the book and it kind of ties all the mini stories together. I really liked the overall plot and it starts out as a mystery and as you read, more and more is discovered. I simply loved this.

If you are a J.R. Ward fan, you will not be disappointed by Bourbon Kings. It has everything you are looking for in a J.R. Ward book, with tension, drama, complex characters and overlapping plots. I LOVED it and I can't wait to re-read it via Audio.

An ARC was provided

AMAZON

Christy says

4.5 stars

Well, that was quite a ride. Have you ever read a book where so much was going on your head was just spinning when you finished? That's kind of how I feel right now. There was so much going on in this book, so many characters, storylines and drama drama drama! And I loved it! I loved that Ward could write a book like this and have everything come together so perfectly. Honestly, even with everything happening, I had no trouble keeping track of the characters or story line so that is a huge plus. I was consumed when listening to the story.

This book focuses on the Baldwin family. Including Lane, Edward and Gin. Along with their father William and brother Max who isn't talked about much. Lane and Lizzie are who I would call the main characters of *The Bourbon Kings*.

Lane and Lizzy have a complicated past. It's been two years since they've seen each other. Two years since Lane has seen anyone in his family. Now he's home. He's determined to get things together and fix things with Lizzy, if she'll have him.

"I can't go back, Lane. I'm sorry. I just can't."

He fell silent. And then after a long while, he nodded. "All right, but can I ask you for one thing?"

No. "Yes."

"Just don't hate me anymore. I'm doing plenty of that on my own time."

?

Lane was by far my favorite character of the bunch, with Edward being a close second. I can't wait to read the next in this series. I'm interested to see if it will focus on Edward or Gin. Either way, I hope we get more Lane and Lizzy. I don't see their story as over.

J.R. Ward is one of those authors that can do no wrong. Whether it's writing my favorite paranormal series that's full of action and emotion, or writing a story about a wealthy Kentucky family that's full of drama and secrets and twists and turns, she masters it all. This is a total win for me. I was addicted to this book and couldn't stop listening! The only issue I had with the story is that there was so much going on, it didn't really focus on the main couple like I would have wished. Also, I wonder if when the next book comes out I'll have trouble remembering everything because SO MUCH happened! Overall, it was still a fantastic read and one I would highly recommend!

Jennifer Kyle says

3.75 “I ‘m going to need a Venn diagram.” Stars

First off, please forgive my casting laziness as there are a ton of characters in this story and although not identical to any television show it sure has the night time soap opera feel.

...the Bradfords truly did take dysfunction to whole new levels.”

As enjoyable as this story of one of the wealthiest family’s in Charlemont, Kentucky is, I think I jumped the gun reading it at this time. I’m not sure how much I’ll remember until the next book is released. Old money, debutantes, trophy wives, deceitful men and ill equipped adults top notch soap opera feel of it all! This story brought the **DRAMA**...in forms of embezzlement, affairs, no protection, arranged marriages, hidden paternity, possible murders or suicides, rape and love.

The story centers around Lane, the prodigal son who returns home after word that his mother is ill. He runs right into his wife and his lost love Lizzie King both of whom he hasn’t seen in two years. Lizzie is the love of his life and his family’s head horticulturist.

”You’re the love of my life, whether you’re with me or not.”

We are treated to many povs and thus along with Lane/Lizzie we meet Edward. Edward is Lane’s big brother who has survived being kidnapped in South America and is now disfigured and broken. He owns and runs Red & Black Stables. I enjoyed Edward’s story line the most. I could read a entire book based only on him and Sutton Smythe.

”I wish I had done this before, “he said in a voice that cracked. “My body was once something worth seeing. I should have... I should have tried to have you before, but I was too much of a coward. I was an arrogant coward – but the truth was, I could have withstood anything except you turning me down.”

Gin is the only daughter of this family and has a sixteen year old daughter that no one knows her true paternity and has a love hate, tit for tat relationship with Samuel T. Her father, the king pin and assuming manipulator of all that happens in this book, insists she marry another.

”I love you Samuel T. This is who we are, who we’ve been since we were teenagers.”

There is another brother Max who is supposedly hard to get in contact with and so that makes a total of four children to William Wyatt Baldwin and their mother who is bedridden. The siblings were raised by Miss Aurora who is ill and the reason Lane came home.

There are suicides, deaths and a ton of money missing, all the while Lane tries to figure out what is going on and him and Lizzie fall back in love. The story ends on a crazy cliffhanger and left me with a **MILLION**

QUESTIONS and THEORIES.

Unless you have an impeccable memory, I would suggest you wait closer to book two's release to dive in. I know it sounds harsh and I have never recommended this course of action before but time will only tell how much I actually retained from my crazy ride with the Bradfords.

Natasha is a Book Junkie says

FULL 6-STAR REVIEW NOW POSTED:

“You’re the love of my life, whether you’re with me or not.”

I have the *biggest* book hangover *ever*. I am literally struggling to find things to occupy my mind with just so I wouldn't go back to re-read this fabulous, oh-so addictive, sinfully moreish book, because at the end of the day, no matter how many times I flip those last few pages, no new ones are going to appear. The first instalment in The Bourbon Kings saga, this is the devastatingly compelling story of a very prestigious Southern family from Kentucky—the Bradfords—and it follows the four Bradford siblings and all the scandals and heartbreak entailed upon them by being born into such wealth and privilege. The best way I can describe the feeling of reading a book such as this would be to say that if *Dynasty* and *Downton Abbey* had a baby, this would be it! I am *telling* you, this book will ruin you, break you, steal your breath away so many times, you'll be breathing into a paper bag by the end of it, and once you recover, you'll be begging for more more *more*!!

“I was almost over you, Lane. I was getting my breath back, my life back.”

While the story as a whole is comprised of a number of intertwined subplots as we get to hear several distinct voices belonging to each Bradford son or daughter, as well as their romantic interests, this book in a way belongs to the youngest Bradford child—Jonathan “Lane” Tulane Baldwine—and the woman he lost two years before but never got over—Lizzie King. Lane has been wasting his life away for two long years, hiding from the world in New York City and spending his days either drinking or playing poker, but the ill health of the only quasi-parent he's ever loved suddenly brings the prodigal son back home, to a house he never wanted to see again, forcing him to face the woman he cannot stop thinking about.

“The one man she never wanted to see again . . . was going to come home.”

Lizzie has been working at the Bradford Family Estate for ten years, working her way up to become one of their most valuable employees. Independent, diligent, proud of her hard work and determined to make it on

her own in life—nothing prepares her for the return of the youngest Bradford son, her body betraying her from the moment they lay eyes on each other again, but two years of separation have not even dimmed her heartbreak or the sting of his betrayal. Lane, however, is a changed man, unwilling to let the love of his life slip through his fingers once again, and prepared to do whatever it takes to convince her to trust him again.

“I’m prepared to be a very patient man when it comes to you. I will seduce you for however long it takes—give you space if you need it or follow you tight as sunshine on your shoulder if you’ll let me. I lost my chance with you once, Lizzie King—that is not going to happen again.”

Lane is not the only Bradford we get to fall in love with in this book, his sister Gin’s and older brother Edward’s storylines being even more captivating and intense at times. Virginia “Gin” Baldwine, is a woman who lost her self-respect a long time ago, a woman who feels deeply and hates herself for all her downfalls, and yet for all those around her she maintains an air of pride, perfection, superiority, and complete emotional detachment. Spoiled by a lifetime of depraved luxury and blessed with good genes, Gin is used to getting her way in everything, especially the men she sleeps with, but ever since she was a teenager, she has loved one man and one man alone—the only man she can never have. For almost two decades, she has played a torturous and unhealthy cat-and-mouse game with Samuel Theodore Lodge III—Samuel T. to his friends—a successful attorney and old family friend, always one-upping each other with their sexual conquests while maintaining a very casual friends-with-benefits arrangement between them. But when two very headstrong people play a cruel game with each other for too long, they eventually end up forgetting why they started playing it in the first place, possibly losing the only chance they get at finding their happily-ever-after.

“To sacrifice her body at the altar of money? Fine. She would do what she had to.”

And then there is Edward Baldwine, the eldest son and heir apparent to the Bradford ‘throne’, a man whose broken body coupled with a lifetime of physical and emotional abuse at the hands of his father have forced him to leave his old life behind, and become a recluse who spends his days training horses and his nights drowning himself in self-pity and alcohol. But even as a shadow of his old self, his heart continues to ache for Sutton Smythe, the daughter of the Bradfords’ biggest competitor and Edward’s best friend since childhood, a woman he never claimed when he had a chance to but secretly loved all his life.

“You must know that I fell in love with you a long time ago. You must know it. How could you not? I’ve been following you around for years—is that why you hate me?”

While he fall head over heels with each Bradford sibling and the people they are destined to love forever, we also see them facing one common problem, a monumental setback that would change all their lives collectively and would require them to either join forces...or watch reality as they know it disappear in a puff of smoke.

A sinfully addictive telenovela-esque collection of jaw-dropping twists and turns, secrets and lies, set against a very enthralling backdrop of Southern wealth and privilege, I never wanted this book to end. *Ever*. I loved all the main characters, felt heartbroken over all their storylines, and cannot wait to see where the series takes us. In the meantime, I’ll be the one rocking in a corner, begging the universe to make the wait for the next book as short as possible.

“This is . . . your time, Lane. God has provided you with a sacred duty to keep this family together. You are the only one who can do it. This is all falling into place because it is your destiny to bind the blood once again. It happens every couple of generations. It’s happening now. This is your time.”

[6 STARS]

See this review on my blog! | Follow me on Facebook! | Follow me on Twitter!

Amazon US: <http://amzn.to/1wFXeke>

Amazon UK: <http://amzn.to/1wd1Yhc>

Amazon CA: <http://amzn.to/13co6xq>

Aestas Book Blog says

Oooh!! New series from JR Ward that has already been optioned for TV/film as well!! I can't wait :-)

... an enthralling new series set amid the shifting dynamics of a Southern family defined by wealth and privilege—and compromised by secrets, deceit, and scandal....

RELEASE DATE: July 28, 2015

Katie Michaels says

If you ever enjoyed the night-time soaps of the 1980s, get ready for the next generation of big-money, family dynasty drama. The Bradford family made its fortune in bourbon, not oil, but all of the major elements are in place: a southern palatial estate, high end cars, private jets... class divisions, a spoiled daughter, and a dastardly patriarch that could put JR Ewing to shame.

But this is JR Ward, you say. How does it compare to the Black Dagger Brotherhood? Simply put, it doesn't. This is in no way, shape, or form like the BDB books. There's no street slang nor product placement. Nobody's "gotchu." Nobody is drinking Grey Goose. Oh --and spoiler alert-- both the hero and the heroine survive the entire book. So there's that.

The books follow the four grown children of the Bradford clan... three brothers and a sister, though one of the brothers, Max, appears only in flashback in book 1. There's the oldest brother, Edward, who was once the heir-apparent and is now recovering from a horrific event that we learn about as the book progresses. There is Gin, the sister, who is a stereotypical rich girl with no skills or redeeming personality traits. And then there is our hero, Lane, the family playboy who left town after breaking Lizzie's heart.

Obviously, Lizzie is our heroine and serves as a horticulturalist on the Bradford estate. She fell in love with

Lane despite herself and it has taken her the past two years to try to get over him. Now that a family emergency has called him back home, the two of them realize that what they had between them never went away and Lane makes it his mission to wipe every obstacle from their path as he tries to rekindle their romance.

It isn't easy... thanks largely to his wife. Now before you get all worried that this is a cheater book, it's not. You'll be ok with this. Just give it a chance. In the meantime, there is a major family calamity unfolding and it threatens the only life the Bradfords have ever known.

I was a little surprised to find that I enjoyed the book, much in the same guilty pleasure way that I binge-watched *Dallas* in reruns while I was in college. It's over the top, but that is part of the indulgence. I've never been a huge fan of the playboy-hero, but Lane really isn't that; it's who he was before he met Lizzie. Now, he's all about fixing his mistakes and finding a way to save his family.

As for Lizzie, she is a little too good to be true at times. I mean, would you keep working for the family of the man who broke your heart, just to prove your fortitude? Would you serve his wife? Put everything aside and feed him lasagna? This is an educated and independent woman. She could do anything. But she chose this path I found a little unlikely. I also felt like I missed something because of the fact that these two fell in love long before I entered the picture. I wanted them to get together, but I didn't burn for it, you know?

I found I was more invested in the set-up for Edward's story. I love a broken hero. (And I am kind of excited about the fact that all of the players in these books are at least in their 30s. Imagine... romances about people who are full-grown!) Anyway, I am so intrigued about his life and ill-fated feelings for the daughter of the rival bourbon makers.

And then there is Gin. I can't say I like her, but her story is a doozy. There is at least one really hardcore scene with her... and the only real emotion I felt in the book came from what happened when she put her heart on the line.

So... final verdict? I liked it. Don't read it looking for what you're used to from Ward. But if the premise intrigues you, I think you'll like it too. I will definitely check out the next installment.

Rating: B

**ARC provided by publisher*
