

The Love Interest

Cale Dietrich

Reviewed by: Rina Guo, 17

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Caden is a boy stuck in the Love Interest Compound (LIC), a facility that trains and perfects teenagers to become seductive but effective spies to some of the most important people in the world. Their job is to get their subjects to fall in love with them so that they can extract potential useful information to other clients or organizations who may be hoping to take these important subjects down in their careers. Caden starts out as one of the many unnamed boys at the facility that are perfectly and surgically altered to be handsome in every way. Each boy is given a classification of “Nice” or “Bad”, with Nice boys being the sweet and charming boys and the Bad boys being the dangerous but attractive boys. When Caden is chosen as a Nice for a girl named Juliet, he’s put up against another Bad, named Dylan, who will similarly try to steal Juliet’s heart. Caden and Dylan both have to fight for Juliet’s choice, because the one she rejects will fail their mission and die. Caden is initially confident that he will win Juliet’s heart and will be spared from a horrible fate, but when he accidentally starts to fall for none other than Dylan himself, he’s stuck between choosing his own life or his lover’s.

This novel is for readers age 15-18. There are some mild sexual jokes and suggestive content. There are also some violent and frightening scenes.

When I first heard about this novel, I was really interested in the fascinating and unique love triangle. As I started to read it, I couldn’t really put it down afterward. I loved how everything played out. Caden and Dylan had really distinctive personalities and I like how they changed as people over time as well. I also love that Juliet was a pretty unique and special character. She wasn’t the stereotypical spoiled or flirtatious kind of girl either. She was instead, a smart scientist prodigy, who embraced her challenges whole-heartedly. She grew as well over the course of the story, and I really appreciate the way the author painted her unique narrative. In terms of the plot, the plot twists really had me going! Nothing seemed to slow down or get boring in any way. It turned out that some seemingly minor and background characters were actually quite pivotal to the story and also had admirable and unique traits as well.

Somehow, I expected the end resolution to be more dramatic and far-fetching. It still achieved a stunning climax that wrapped up everything really nicely, but after the big event, lots of questions seemed unanswered. The epilogue provides a unique look at how Caden and Dylan end up years later, but the scene is a stark contrast from the chapters right before it. It feels as a huge mound of information is missing between the last chapter and the epilogue, that has me wondering for more. Other than that though, I think everything flowed and went down really well in terms of the plot.

I would recommend this book for readers who like science fiction and romance. There’s also LGBTQ representation as well, which is a great plus!

Recommended Titles:

Been Here All Along by Sandy Hall

The Friend Scheme by Cale Dietrich

If This Gets Out by Sophie Gonzales and Cale Dietrich

Matched by Ally Condie

Simon vs. the Homo Sapiens Agenda by Becky Albertalli