



Refuge

Lisa Tawn Bergren

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BOOK 1 IN THE BEST-SELLING FULL CIRCLE SERIES

Will the danger that stalks them destroy their life together before it begins?

When Rachel Johanssen dared Beth Morgan to answer a personal ad in *The Rancher's Journal*, she never thought her citified friend would become a bona fide rancher's wife. Now Rachel, too, is falling in love with the glorious valley...as well as with Dirk Tanner, a rugged rancher who makes it his home. Rachel isn't the only San Franciscan newly drawn to the Elk Horn Valley. Jake Rierdon, son of a San Francisco client, has taken a shine to ranch life too--and to beautiful young Emily Walker. But will threats from the present and the past destroy any chance the couples have to build a future?

Refuge Details

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Beverly says

Happiness

Rachel and Emily both different but each think they know what's best for them. Oh how each were wrong but not until they meet God, Dirk, and Jake in the beautiful country of Montana. We think we know what we want in all things especially love but if we would stop and ask God we would find that's not always the truth. I love the way the author showcases me being God loving men. A good read...

Denise Kettering says

This book is pretty predictable in that you know from the beginning that the two characters are going to fall in love, but that it is going to take some convincing to actually get them together by the end of the book. Despite its predictability, fans of the genre will find it a good read and a generally quick read. Bergren does not simply brush over questions of faith or tragedy and the characters actually have a few flaws that keep them from becoming simply caricatures.

The book is really two novellas that are put together on the location of ranch in the Elk Horn Valley of Montana. The first features the love story of Rachel and Dirk, big city girl and farm boy, who each like their life the way it is and so try to resist their attraction. However, a series of events only draws the two closer together, but they have many issues to work through before they can commit to each other. The second story features the story of Jake and Emily. Emily is fleeing some problems and it takes convincing to make her realize that Jake loves her the way she is.

ChrisGA says

Two parts

First part-Love on a Montana ranch between rancher and a city girl. What do you do if you live 800 miles apart and don't have a chance to get to know if they are meant to be together. Sexual harassment, drunk driving, kidnapping, and a friend's miscarriage add conflict to the romance.

Second Part--homeless young woman found almost frozen to death and is taken in at the Tanner ranch. All is well until Jake's mother shows up. Sweet romances with interesting characters.

Jenelle says

Right after I complained about wishy-washy religious devotion in one book, I stumbled into one that was almost completely the opposite. It was *almost* overkill, but I'll get to that in a second.

First of all, I want to clarify that this was NOT the cover that I saw-- mine was a completely benign

mountain valley. If I had seen this, I probably would have skipped it.

Second, one of my favorite series' is by this author, and I had read one of her other books, too, though it wasn't as great. And since those were all historical, I assumed this was too. But it's not and contemporary romance is usually totally gaggy to me, so that would have been another reason to skip it.

Anyhow, that being said, the story is a perfect comfort read-- interesting enough, but not ground-breaking, and paced and told well enough that you never even think about those kinds of details. You just sit back and take it in like a movie.

It's got some intense parts and some scary parts and some cutesy, lovey-dovey parts, but overall it's clean and wholesome (practically garnering the "Christian" label just from that).

But there are two things (or maybe it's really one) that set this apart from the majority of Christian Romance:

The characters actually practice their religion and truly try to live by it. It's the moral compass they use to direct their actions. It's more than a habit or a custom or social expectation or once-a-week-worship. They're really, truly, legitimate believers.

So, when times get tough and they start praying for help, it actually feels like they deserve it, because they do their part the rest of the time (notice I said 'deserve' and not 'earn').

But more than that, they live in such a way that others want to as well. They are joyful, hopeful, faithful, and charitable. It seems too good to be true to most people, and indeed to some of the characters, too, but it's not impossible or unheard of in real life. It's just unusual and uncommon (I'm kind of thinking it's probably more feasible in a remote, industrious culture like this one, though--less distraction, less time for non-essentials. But that could also be the cowboy romance element swaying me).

What it comes down to, though, is that the characters aren't the only things full of light, the story is too. The "Light of Christ" can be hard to explain, but it's very, very real. People who have it almost seem to glow. They radiate this sense that they are more complete, more whole, just full of something 'other'. Madeline L'Engle calls it "a light so lovely that [others] want with all their hearts to know the source of it." Nephi explains it as "having a perfect brightness of hope," which I think may be the most accurate way to describe it. It's trust and love and promise for the future so great that darkness just can't exist in the same place. So when I say that the book has it too, I mean that the 'good' in the story doesn't just outweigh the 'bad' or that it even chases away the 'bad'-- it flat out neutralizes the forces of darkness. It dissolves it, renders it inert, eviscerates it, whatever.

It's not just a feel-good story, or a bittersweet story with a happy ending, or a faith-in-humanity-restored type of deal. Those are all great, but rarely engender real change in the reader's life. I think this one does, though. A day later, and I still feel a glow from a story that isn't all that profound. It left me with something- an imprint, maybe?- that feels almost tangible. Like a spark, perhaps.

Ugh, I'm kind of just rambling nonsensically now. Look, it's no secret that the whole concept of "Christian" literature is sort of odd to me for a multitude of reasons. I believe in Christ, so I can call myself Christian, but good grief, how many variations are there of that, along with my own faith as a Mormon? As I mentioned before, sometimes just the fact that it's clean can sometimes give it that label, but how exactly is it defined and why. It's not like there's "Muslim Romance" or "Buddhist Romance" or even "Jewish Romance" categories (that I know of-my apologies if I'm being hopelessly ignorant here), because by and large,

romance is romance and most faiths roughly agree on moral standards. So is it the belief in Christ, then, that makes it distinct, and if so, should that not be a central theme in the story? I guess the reason I take issue with it at all is because my personal beliefs are not just sacred to me, they are me, so naturally I want to protect them. And because Christianity is somehow more ridiculous to our society than other religions, I'm especially sensitive to derogatory implications. Because what I believe, what I know, is pure awesome and makes me so happy, that it shouldn't be dismissed because it falls under this huge umbrella of vaguely relevant notions that are thereby foolish by association. Does that make sense?

Not like anyone cares. Sometimes I make my reviews too much like a bloggy soap-box, but since I don't have a blog, and books make me think, this is where it all ends up. Sorry y'all.

P.S. Maybe you're wondering why, after all this, I only gave it 3 stars? Well, cause it was slightly vanilla (why do we say that- vanilla is amazing!) and even a little saccharine for my tastes. And because it was almost, ALMOST too pushy. If I wasn't a Christian, I can't promise that it wouldn't turn me off as being a bit preachy. And as close as it comes to meeting my expectations for the "Christian" aspect, I'm just still not all that fond of contemporary romances for some reason.

Stacy says

As much as I loved the characters, I did not enjoy the book as much as I had hoped I would. There are essentially two books in one, the first about Rachel and Dirk, and the second about Emily and Jake, set on two ranches in Montana.

In the first part Rachel visits her newly married friend Beth and her husband Matt and is, not so subtly, thrown together with Dirk. Around the middle of the book she realizes she begins to love being part of a church family. One of Matt's workers, Alex, has an eye for Rachel, and we find out later that he is obsessed with her. Toward the end of the book Alex kidnaps Rachel. Thankfully, Matt and Dirk find her and she is rescued. She goes back to California, but realizes she misses Dirk and is in love with him. After deciding to go back and eventually become his wife, even though he has yet to propose, she finds him in California, proposing.

In the second part Emily is found during the winter by Rachel, Dirk, and Jake. She is homeless and distrustful of everyone at first, but comes to enjoy life on the ranch and even finds love with Jake. She also comes to believe in Jesus and her personality changes from timid to fun. Unfortunately, Jake's parents come for a visit and Emily runs away after overhearing how much Jake's mom is displeased with her. She hitchhikes to California and is almost killed and/or raped by a gang when Jake and his private detective friend find her and are able to take her home. The story ends with Emily and Jake promising to be in each other's lives forever.

To me the plots seemed very contrived, almost as if the characters did not grow themselves, but were forced into a mold made by the author. There are a few times the author throws in some kind of shock factor that takes away from the story because the shock factor seems so out of place. I was pleased with the author's way of describing the characters and scenery; all of it was very easy for me to picture, and many times I felt as though I were there actually seeing it.

Marie says

I have read this book a number of times over the years. It just a sweet love story. Lisa's more recent series (The Homeward Trilogy and the Gifted series) are amazing. This author has grown and developed into an accomplished writer over the years. I'm so impressed with her progress and the stories she puts out.

Susan says

My eyes are sore from all the eye rolling that I did while listening to this book. Ugh! So freaking mushy and the dialog is sooooo fake! No man would ever speak the way this guy does or so the things he does and what's more... no woman would want the man to. Gag, blah, ugh and all the other vomitous (that's a word right?) noises a person can make. Don't waste your time!

Wendy Sparkes says

Enjoyed this 1st book in the Full Circle Series - Listened to the audiobook version of this story.

#2

#3

#4

#5

#6

Heather says

Awesome story... can't wait to get to the next one! This book was one I didn't want to put down, very easy to read... pulling you into each character. Bergren writes well to keep your attention & has many different spots in here where you'll need the tissues. I love how she is able to weave everyday life, walking with God - - even coming to God throughout the story!

April says

Rachel, a big ad executive in San Francisco, goes to visit her friend Beth in the Elkhorn valley of Montana. Along the way she falls in love with Dirk Tanner. Unfortunately, there is a bad guy in the form of a ranch hand, Alex, who causes immense grief for Rachel and Beth and her husband Matt.

All eventually works out as it must in a romance.

There is overt references to God. It was nice to see the personal relationships with God develop, but if you aren't into Christian fiction you might want to pass this by.

The book goes on to tell the story of Emily Walker and Jake Rierden. Emily is found in the side of the road in a snow storm. She takes two days to wake and then she is very leery of everyone around her. Eventually romance develops between Emily and Jake as Emily grows in confidence and trust. We must have the

running away element though and when Jake's mother disapproves Emily goes on the run. Jake has a difficult time finding her, but as a love story it must end happily and so they get back together after some trials that could have been avoided if Emily hadn't run off in the first place.

Ah, what is love without trial and conflict. Although I must say it felt a bit unnatural.

Maybe I am just jaded because I used to suck up this type of book like it was life giving water. Enjoyable but not necessarily believable.

Michele says

I wanted to give this book 3 1/2 stars but that is not an option. When I first started the book, it was enjoyable enough the storyline was very predictable. It then took a turn that I wasn't expected and made the book much more interesting. The Christian aspect of this author's work was more in front than the first one I read. It did manage to make life in rural Montana somewhat enticing but not enough to make me want to move there.

Colletta Miller says

Started out a bit cliché but picked up through the second half.

Brenda says

I listened to this book while exercising. This book had some deep emotions in it. There were times I laughed-out-loud while listening to this book. Other times I wanted to cry. The author did a great job developing the characters so they seemed really human. The setting was described vividly. Even though the author followed the typical outline for a "Christian" story, I still enjoyed the time spent with the story. I will seek out this author again in the future.

Theresa says

Story is two parts, two relationships. I barely made it through the first part. I couldn't make myself continue when I realized it was going to be more of the same drivel with different characters. I won't read another of her books.

Samantha says

I'm going to be straight forward, when I read the back of the book I knew how these stories were gonna go. Boy meets girl, fall in love in a week, girl leaves, realizes she messed up, and be back. Of course that is how most loves stories go. I originally read Waterfall from Lisa's YA series and enjoyed her style of writing. I wanted to try her adult books and was not disappointed.

Story lines that are continuously done sometimes are hard to read. I enjoyed how Lisa introduced her

characters and gave their back stories. As predictable as they were they were fun to read. I plan to read the rest of her series and see if they are as enjoyable as this was.
