



Sanctuary Cove

Rochelle Alers

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Sometimes love is the simplest choice of all.

Still reeling from her husband's untimely death, Deborah Robinson needs a fresh start. So she decides to pack up her family, box up her bookstore, and return to her grandmother's ancestral home on Cavanaugh Island. The charming town of Sanctuary Cove holds happy memories for Deborah. And, after she spies a gorgeous stranger in the local bakery, it promises the possibility for a bright, new future.

Dr. Asa Monroe is at a crossroads. Ever since the loss of his family, he has been on a quest for faith and meaning, traveling from one town to another. When he meets Deborah, the beautiful bookstore owner with the warm eyes and sunny smile, Asa believes he has finally found a reason to stay in one place.

As friendship blossoms into romance, Deborah and Asa discover they may have a second chance at love. But small towns have big secrets. Before they can begin their new life together, the couple must confront a challenge they never expected . . .

Sanctuary Cove Details

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Mary Gramlich says

SANCTUARY COVE by Rochelle Alers

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Do life changes always have to be so difficult?

Deborah Robinson is dealing with a new business, going back home with her children, and living life as a widow. Her husband died a hero but the road to recovery is not easy when you have to say goodbye to old hurts. Moving forward is a challenge as well for Asa Monroe who has found some healing to his broken heart in this quaint, Southern town and its easygoing manner.

Small towns come with their own set of rules and a lack of privacy is the least of the worries that Deborah is dealing with. As she tries to release the past and move forward she, stumbles over guilt and too many memories from the life she had preventing her from building the life new now wants. The new bookstore she opens helps and finding Asa working for her exciting. He does not say much but there is a world of experiences he has also lived that she wants him to share. Every day they grow closer and discovering all his secrets is a healing balm for both of their hearts as they allow themselves to move toward a future.

Reading about two tattered souls finding each other and moving on with their lives is romance at its finest. This is a story of two people dealing with real life issues and making the difficult adult decisions everyone has to accomplish. My only question about this book is did Crystal get a dog or not?

Morgan says

When I was starting to progress through this story, I felt like I was entering a room where a fan on full-blast blows rose petals in your face like the anime, Ouran High School Host Club. (If you haven't seen that anime, I highly recommend it. It's funny as hell!) I was expecting a fluffy romance based on the cover and got it, but I was surprised it was a black romance. It impressed me that Rochelle Alers is more flowery than most mainstream (white) authors and she lathered elegance like thick buttercream frosting.

The story starts out with Deborah Robinson moving her children to Cavanaugh Island after her husband's death and the false accusations towards him prior to his death. It's only less than a month before she heals quickly with pangs of guilt in between when she settles easily into her new life in great detail. Her children are perfect in every way and hardly gives her a hard time. A perfect man named Asa Monroe crosses paths with her as he's traveling after selling his practice when he became widowed and lost his son. Everything he does is perfect and there is little argument between the romance interests.

There is a lot of telling of the drama but you don't feel the emotions behind it and the story is pretty anticlimactic for the most part. Out of the two widows, I think Asa grieves a little more realistically than Deborah despite losing his wife and child about a year ago whereas Deborah lost her husband about three weeks ago. Her kids seem sad about it, but they still behave like dolls with stiff witty phrases thrown in. The secondary characters actually express emotions a little bit better than the main characters. It felt like the author was being extremely careful on how her characters behaved. She had to make sure they were doing

everything right to a point where it followed a trope with precision. This was like detailed stitching.

Aside from the Gullah culture and background, you still feel this town is filled with southern belles and you hardly heard any of the language or words being expressed by the locals. I know it can be hard to understand the dialect of it, but I've read enough black literature to understand some of it and it's a matter of getting used to the voice of the novel. I don't know the author's reason for making the story so pristine and polished, but I felt the characters didn't have much freedom to feel freely or react impulsively like any other flawed human being.

Maybe I'm overthinking this, but did Rochelle feel like she had to write her black characters well-behaved so they wouldn't be subjected to racist stereotypes by readers? I suppose a lot of people think it's okay for white people to behave like nimrods since they feel they're allowed to act like assholes and be excused for it whereas non-white people are thrown into a category and judged for their mistakes. I don't know. There's nothing wrong for black people to like frilly things and fluffy romances (or God-forbid, Deborah loving *Twilight*). That itself breaks a lot of stereotypes and everyone regardless of who they are can like whatever they want. But I felt the story didn't flow naturally despite it being a fluffy romance. It felt premeditated and acted out rather than feeling it.

Meredith says

I gave up on page 42 after getting frustrated with the insane amount of "telling" from the narrator. Could have been an interesting story but I like to read books where the author doesn't feel the need to explain everything! Writing style also felt really awkward.

Kamesa Carter says

I have read many, many books from Ms. Alers and have enjoyed them. I also enjoyed this book, but this one issue kept me from giving it more than three stars. I know that reading romance novels require some suspension of disbelief, but this was just too much.

When we are introduced to Deborah, we learn that she is a very recent widow as her beloved husband died only a month ago. We are told she and her husband married very young and they loved each other very much for nearly 20 years when he died unexpectedly. We are told that Deborah has moments where she cries and that she thinks about her dearly departed husband and is very sad.

After four weeks of grieving her loss, Deborah packs up her house and moves her kids to Cavanaugh Island where she has a home that she inherited from her grandmother. She also plans to open a bookstore. Somewhere along the way, she meets and is attracted to Asa, a snowbird who recently moved to the island. He too is widowed, having lost his wife and son in a terrible car accident several years ago.

This is where the issue comes in: While I understand that people grieve in different ways and on different timelines, I find it hard to believe that a woman who was married to her high school sweetheart for almost 20 years (and who had been the only man she was ever intimate with until Asa) would move on so quickly. It would not have been such an issue if the story opened a year or two after his death, but one month?

Then there's Deborah's kids. I would expect kids to have some resistance to their parent moving on to someone new after a loss of any kind, but her shiny, perfect children had no problem with it.

I was disappointed about the "secrets" in the story. I was hoping that the dearly departed Mr. Robinson was actually guilty of the scandal at his job or that he was an abusive jerk to Deborah and the kids. Nope. Again, the absence of this plus Deborah's moving on so quickly after her husband's death made her and Asa's romance kind of hard to root for.

Overall, I was glad that the nearly 40 year old Deborah was the heroine, where 20-somethings are usually the stars in romance novels. Seasoned characters are usually the ones giving romantic advice, not actually having the romances, so that was refreshing. The HEA was stereotypical, and I wished it had been different for a woman who spent the majority of her adulthood married with children, but now it's going to be more of the same only now she has a bookstore.

I will read the rest of the series because it looks very interesting.

Daisy White says

I have read a lot of books from all kinds of authors from all different backgrounds, all different cultures, but this one I guessed through most of the novel about what the characters looked like. Were they African American or White... I went back and forth guess the who time until chapter 22 when the author dropped it on us what we were reading about. I mean come on she had me going for a while.

I think the reason it bothered me so much was that the author did not give us a description of what the main characters looked like until chapter 22. During that time I spent most of my time guess what this person looks like.

Other than that, it was an easy read that could be read by the pool or by the fire with kids dance around your feet. I enjoyed it and it helped me calm down from my last book read.

Joyce says

A fast light and easy read about two people who are widowed. Deborah Robinson moves herself and two children to Cavanaugh Island after the death of her husband where she opens a bookstore and meets Dr. Asa Monroe who lost his wife and son a year ago. Friendship blossoms into romance very quickly and gives them a second chance at love and a life together.. This is a summer read with no strength of characters. Enjoy!

Book of Secrets says

SANCTUARY COVE is an engrossing story about love, loss and finding the strength to carry on. I fell in love with Cavanaugh Island and the people who call Sanctuary Cove home. At 38, Deborah is faced with raising two teenagers on her own after the unexpected death of her husband. She moves her children and her

bookstore to Sanctuary Cove, located on an island not far from Charleston. As a child, Deborah spent summers there with her grandmother. She feels the cove, with its strong sense of community, is the perfect place to start a new chapter in her life, though she's still dealing with the grief of losing her husband.

Deborah meets the very handsome and charming Dr. Asa Monroe, someone who has faced a loss even greater than hers, though she doesn't know it at first. Asa is just a temporary resident of Sanctuary Cove. It's a nice place to spend the winter while he waits for his Doctors Without Borders application to be approved. Deborah is the first woman in a very long time to touch his broken heart, and they form a close friendship. As the friends become lovers, they must overcome the emotional obstacles in the way of making their relationship permanent.

SANCTUARY COVE was a very enjoyable read. I'm a big fan of "new beginning" stories, and this one was beautifully written. The characters that Ms. Alers created were genuine and easy to connect with. There was a lot of emotion packed between the covers, both happy and sad, but the ending left me hopeful. I would recommend this book to fans of contemporary romance – Deborah and Asa's love story shouldn't be missed. SANCTUARY COVE is the first book in the Cavanaugh Island series. I'm looking forward to visiting there again.

Audra says

This is my first Rochelle Alers book. There are five in the Cavanaugh Island series and I am going to read them all.

I hesitate to give a writer three stars because even though that means I liked the book, three stars translates as something different to a person who may be trying to decide whether or not to read a book. As a pre-published author, I know how much goes into writing a book and I don't like tearing apart anyone's work.

Let me explain why I gave the book three stars. First, the author felt the need to explain everything. When I read a book, I like to become so engrossed in the story that I forget I'm reading fiction. The author pulled me out of story quite a few times with the history facts about the Gullah people. Don't get me wrong, I love learning about the history of my people, but the way she did it here kind of disrupted the story.

Second, is the very brief amount of time that Deborah grieved the loss of her husband. God forbid I lost my husband, I would still be in a grief stupor after four weeks. I just didn't find this believable. She also said that she felt things with Asa that she never felt with her husband, yet she said she and her husband had a healthy sex life. There was a disconnect there for me.

However, the story was still a good one and the romance scenes were steamy like I like them. I will continue on with the series because overall I think the author is a very solid writer.

Even though I only gave it three stars, it's a very good story line and it's worth the read. I'm curious to see what develops on Cavanaugh Island.

Michelle says

(Audiobook). Didn't finish. Loved the Southern setting, and the descriptions of all the low country food made me just about lose my mind, but I just couldn't get past the fact that the main character (with a lot of encouragement from her friends), was ready to get right back on the horse a scant four weeks after putting the husband she loved and adored in the ground! Four goddamn weeks!!! I grieved longer than that when Ezell's stopped making those delicious onion rings! Seriously! I haven't been back for chicken and yeast rolls for MONTHS, because I just can't stomach the idea of walking out of there without my rings & ranch. And this character is ready to go after a month?!?! If someone I loved died, it would take me a month just to get out of bed. I sure as hell wouldn't be thinking on getting someone else into it. And yes, I realize I'm being a little ridiculous, but it really bugged me. I couldn't concentrate on the rest of the story, because I just kept intermittently yelling at my car radio, "It's been four goddamn weeks, lady!!!" Sorry. Can't get past it. I'll try to read a different book by the author, as this was my first one, and I don't want to throw the baby out with the bath water.

Debra Odom says

I wish I had read this book before I read Angel's Landing. I love the story of Deborah and Asa. I think this book describes more in detail what is going on on Cavanaugh Island. Just like all of Alers' books, this is another happy ever after book. Unlike other readers, I did not have a problem with Deborah being attracted to another man so soon after the death of her husband. There are clues that although she loved her husband, the relationship was lacking: when she said she had not danced with anyone in years (not even her husband) and her husband was the first man that she had been with. It seemed as if she and her husband had a robotic relationship. Asa, it seems, gave her passion! I think that deep down long before her husband drowned she desired that passion too! This is why I love Rochele Alers' books

Tia says

This was a beautiful well written story about lost loves, going home, family, the love of friends, community, and renewed faith. I enjoyed Sanctuary Cove and throughout reading about this town and the people in it, I found myself wondering where I would fit in it. I immediately wanted to look it up on Google and search the listings for a place in town to call my own. This story is about Deborah and Asa who've both experienced loss and are trying to carve out a place for themselves to belong. Through friendship and companionship they find love. Deborah is a devoted mother to her two teen children and who I found to be quite independent, despite being married for over 20 years. She has strong values and long history on the Island.

I enjoyed learning about the Gullah people, the island and Deborah's family history. This was more of a contemporary novel than a romance. There are some romantic scenes but I wouldn't call them steamy or hot. If you are looking to curl up with a good read, be transported to an intoxicating and serene location and dream of being a snowbird, this is the book for you.

Bettye Griffin says

A solid 3-1/2 stars. The author did a wonderful job of transporting readers to Cavanaugh Island and creating an environment to which they will want to return again and again. Therein lies this book's strength (and the reason I rated it a 4 rather than a 3).

This book had two weaknesses in my eyes, one of which was major. I didn't understand why the heroine was attracted to the hero just weeks after her husband's death, and I kept waiting for it to be revealed that the late Mr. Robinson was a tomcat or that she had fallen out of love with him...to no avail. This made her much less sympathetic in my eyes. I really saw no reason why he couldn't have been dead at least a year, with her moving her family to the island immediately afterward and then after being there for a while, preparing to open the bookstore. It's true there is no timetable for matters of the heart, but her falling in love with another man so quickly gave her dead husband all the importance of an old faucet replaced with a newer model. No one in town seemed to find this odd, either, which struck me as unrealistic.

My minor quibble was the ending, which, like most endings of this type, is like seeing the lights of a speeding train coming from five miles away. It's a minor issue because these things do happen in real life, and very frequently, but it's difficult, if not impossible, to make it fresh. From the moment the statement is made the book was pretty much over, because you know what's coming next. I found it amusing that the heroine's own children were confused when they learned of this development, which only drives home how quickly this all happened.

In summary, a great setting that puts the reader right in the center, no matter where you live; and solid writing, but a flawed story. The first two have me intrigued enough to read the second book when it comes out.

Kathleen J says

I had two major problems with the novel. The first is with characterization. This woman tells us what a wonderful man, husband and father her husband was. She talks about how great her love for him was. She is supposedly grieving for him--she cries at regular intervals. But then four weeks after his death she seems back to her normal self except for the crying spells. She is in a generally upbeat mood, visiting with friends, smiling, chatting, even laughing upon occasion, excited about her new store. But strangest of all to me about her behavior is that she is smiling at and flirting with another man who strongly attracts her. She feels a little guilty about it but most of the time when she is with him she is feeling like a teenager with a crush.

Her kids seem to be the same. The daughter gets upset at one point about something related to her dad, but otherwise the kids also seem upbeat--interested as much as usual in activities like cheer leading practice and the big dance, etc. Now, if this had been six months out from the husband's death, POSSIBLY even three, okay. But 4 weeks? At four weeks most people would still be in shock. So I had a very difficult time with suspension of disbelief. Another thing about characterization: the relationship between the H and h seemed strange to me. They were often saying or doing things when relating to each other that had me thinking, "What???"

The other problem I had was related to the craft of writing. There was too much repetition. She tells us things then tells us the same thing again and again. Like information about the H's family. She also spends too much time telling us things that are not important to the story: every single little move anyone makes while in the kitchen, conversations about boring, everyday stuff. One of the things that makes the story interesting is all of the detail she gives about the location and culture, but too often it sounds like a lecture to the reader rather than anything someone would actually say to another.

Okay. Those are the down sides. These aren't the kinds of things that deter all readers. Ms. Alers is good at composing sentences and at other basic writing skills. The story flows well, we like the h and H (except for

some readers who think he is too macho--and he is rather but that may be because of cultural differences and so will not deter some readers either.) It is a rather sweet story set in an ideal world where everyone looks out for everyone else, children are perfect, money is not an issue and small town people can win out over the big developer types. I actually like my stories one degree closer to reality but, hey, that's me. I won't be reading any more of Ms. Alers stories because, for me, the negatives get in the way too much but I can well imagine that other readers may enjoy her novels.

Michele says

I did not finish this book for a couple of reasons. First, there was the talk of sexual tension and body parts. That was bad enough but I worried about it getting even more explicit. Second, it just didn't grab my attention. A story of a widow, Deborah, with two teen-aged children, who moves to her grandmother's home on Cavanaugh Island to open a bookstore. Then, there is Asa Monroe, a widower who also lost his son in a car accident. Asa decides to help Deborah with her bookstore but they both realize they are attracted to each other. The story-line did not grab me and after one too many descriptions of things I find offensive, I stopped the book.

I was listening to the audioversion, which I normally love. However, the narrator had a habit of moving from one section to another with nary a breath such that you didn't realize at first that you were on to a different scene. This was a bit irritating.

Rena says

More like 3.5

While really enjoyed this foray into small town life on Cavanaugh Island with Deborah and Asa, I had a few faults with Asa's sometimes-domineering behavior. Yet, the love story made me feel things and that's what's important.
