



## Arms of Love

*Carmen Marcoux*

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**Arms of Love** Carmen Marcoux

Enter the world of Joanie Collins and Brandon Vaughn...

Joanie, a strong Catholic woman, setting out in a new career as a journalist, must face one of the greatest challenges of her young life . . . romance. Committed to the values of Christian courtship, Joanie finds herself attracted to the handsome young commercial producer, Brandon - a man living a very worldly lifestyle. Brandon makes every effort to draw the attractive young reporter into his charms and into his world. Meanwhile, Joanie is battling to resist his advances, as she earnestly seeks to bring Jesus into Brandon's life.

## Arms of Love Details

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# From Reader Review Arms of Love for online ebook

## Janet says

A thoroughly Roman Catholic homeschool affirming, pro-life romance novel espousing the teachings of the Church regarding love, family life, courtship, conversion, and vocations. A beautifully written and moving story, this is an excellent book for youth discerning married life and for the rest of us who sometimes forget that it is the Lord after all who is at the heart of all romance.

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## Liesel says

This book was cheesecake on two cheese crackers, but I loved the message and the inspiration behind it. I had to really get over my cynicism to get through the dialogue, but once I viewed it as more of a very light spiritual reading, it became a much better read. I agree with other reviewers that the book doesn't really deal with internal struggles of conversion and living the faith. The author gives only a few situations where the people are not saints, and even then they aren't really bad. And I think it was a tad unrealistic that none of the converted ever fell back into "evil ways", but when you look past that, it is a great way to introduce the idea of courtship which I thought was great.

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## Michaela says

I was a conservative home schooled Catholic girl of about 15 when I read this book, and even then I couldn't help but find it repulsive. First of all, the writing quality is inferior. I've been more grammatically educated by Safeway paperbacks.

Something that really bothered me about this book was how petty it was. Joanie's thoughts are constantly for Jesus. She prays to Jesus for every single little thing, including helping her get out of bed in the morning and knowing what to say next in a conversation with an attractive member of the opposite sex, as if she has no idea how to do it on her own (great reinforcement of the theory that home schooling your kids is a perfectly healthy way of breaking them into social culture). I personally don't know how anyone could ever find her attractive or admirable, especially a smart, well-liked and flirtatious guy like Brandon. In my experience, girls who wear their faith on their sleeve put guys off.

But nothing tops how simply wrong the message of the story is. The WORST idea you can plant in the mind of a girl is that converting and marrying a "bad boy" like Brandon is perfectly achievable. Every girl - Catholic or not - DREAMS of gaining access to the heart of a bad boy and bringing him to the realization that her love is everything he needs. The mere thought is porn for women, and it's about as realistic as porn too. A beautiful woman ripping her clothes off the moment a strange dude shoves his hand down her pants is about as likely to happen as a tormented guy converting to Catholicism when he sees a girl say grace in the break room.

"Arms of Love" is a shallow, petty, unrealistic, and ultimately misleading waste of time. Don't even bother with it.

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## Emily Murphy says

All of these ratings are on a 1-10 scale.

### Writing Quality: 2

This is a terribly written book. Comma usage is often incorrect (unless it's a Canadian style I don't know about?). Besides that, it's super cheesy. (when out canoeing, "They were about to get really wet!" Really. I was wondering.) The style is overall immature and forced casual - lie saying "best of pals." I hated how certain elements (the fact that Brandon is a great public speaker) were just thrown in for the sake of making either character more perfect. But it did have some good quips or cute lines occasionally, which spared it a 1.

### Pace: 4

This book lingers and plods along, dragging out certain moments that were very similar to moments seen before. However, it does maintain a distinct timeline which is easy to follow. I appreciated that.

### Plot Development: 4

The plot was very easy to follow and straightforward: Boy meets girl. Girl converts boy to Christianity. They fall in love and convert the world. But that's just it: it's unrealistic. No one converts that quickly. Well, in the book no one was strongly atheist to begin with. I'd like Joanie to meet some hardcore liberals and see what happens. Also, the two plots (romance and Christianity) were so intertwined as to leave you with only one plot. This could be a good thing (if you favor one-plot stories) or a bad thing (if you prefer epics and subplots like me).

### Characters: 7

Though unrealistic for the most part, I felt like I knew the characters extremely well by the end. If Joanie walked in the room, I would feel comfortable talking to her. Not Brandon so much, as I was viewing the story from his perspective (so he was me). I could visualize Caroline and James without difficulty. While I didn't fully distinguish the Collins family, I enjoyed Grandpa, Grandma, and Jessie especially and I wish I could be at their family parties.

### Enjoyability: 5

It's very difficult to get past the horrible writing quality for this book. Yet if you peer into the message, it becomes very powerful. And like I said, the reader knows the characters. That makes it enjoyable, but every time one picks it up one must absorb the bad writing.

### Insightfulness: 9

I was impressed with some of the truths this book presented. Like the idea that waiting until marriage for sex would deepen respect in a relationship: not only respect for a person, but respect for their boundaries. I appreciated the opportunity to grow in my faith alongside Brandon. The one thing I will critique on: they keep saying "becoming a Christian," but then suddenly everyone is Catholic. Believing Jesus as your Lord only makes you Baptist; I would have liked to have more emphasis on the Eucharist since they are Catholic.

### Ease of reading: 9

There aren't any secrets in this book. Every word on the page is exactly what is meant. Combine that with low-intelligence-friendly phrases like "best of pals," and this book is 100% readable. Except for the terrible writing quality, which prevents a 10 rating.

All this averages to a 5.7, making a 2.9 on a 5/5 scale, rounding off to a 3.

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### **Anna says**

A very amazing book outlining a set of ideals not seen in today's society. Occasionally the style can be lacking, but the content makes up for it.

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### **Amber says**

My Dad gave me this book. I was offended at first, thinking he thought of me as some kind of hussy. The more I read it the more I enjoy it and realized that anyone struggling with dating/love/life could enjoy this book and get something out of it

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### **R&J says**

This was incredible heart wrenching book for me. What beautiful truth wrapped in a lovely, romantic tale. It makes me want to be a better wife and mother but most importantly gives great advice/ideas for raising strong catholic children for Christ who will hold on to their purity until the Christ-chosen spouse comes along!

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### **Nicole Catherine says**

This is a book from a Catholic point of view. As I am extremely Catholic and conservative myself, this was totally natural for me. It was a book set in my world. But for people of other beliefs, it might seem a little bit pushy.

However, this book presents Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body very thoroughly. It shows the importance of chastity, the beauty of courtship, etc etc. I learned a bunch, and I know people from other faiths can too.

The writing style isn't exactly great. But if you stop thinking of it as a book, and think of it as a story your grandma or somebody is telling you about real people, then it's a little easier to take. And it really is a sweet story, sweet as in "awwwwww". I'd recommend it to girls looking for love - since no guy could never get past all the lovey-dovey stuff, and the guys I know could never get past the sub-par writing. :)

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### **Julie says**

Recommended by several friends. This is a good story however I could have done without the author's moments of lengthy soapbox catechesis. Definitely agree that some areas are over the top, but overall it was

still a good read.

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### **Maureen O'brien says**

I read this book when it first came out several years ago. I've lent it out multiple times and just got it back again. I re-read it this week to decide if my 15 yo was ready to read this book and officially passed it on to her yesterday.

This is a story of a Catholic family, living a life of faith and the 'coming of age" of their teens as they explore the concepts of dating and chastity. This book does a wonderful job of exploring the tenets of Theology of the Body.

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### **Jean says**

I realize that mine is the unpopular opinion, but I read this book when I was in high school and loved it, thought it was so romantic, didn't kiss my first boyfriend because of it, etc etc.

I recently reread it, as a happily married adult, and realized that, though well intentioned, this book is pure propaganda aimed at teens, very clearly pushing a very conservative agenda. And frankly, I didn't like the unrealistic lengths it went to in order to realize that agenda.

Everyone who Joanie meets IMMEDIATELY converts or reconverts to Catholicism with no backsliding to their previous "hedonistic" lifestyles whatsoever.

The one girl who meets Joanie and immediately informs her boyfriend not only that she's moving back in with her parents (despite being a grown woman who can afford to live alone) but that she refuses to use contraception anymore? Despite absolutely no previous indication that she had any problem with it? Give me a break.

I'm all for loving Jesus and for living a chaste lifestyle, but this book is clearly trying to push a message on teenagers and impressionable young women that there is only one acceptable lifestyle, period, and deviating from it will make you miserable until you meet someone who gets you back on the correct path. I'm sorry, but I just don't think that's true.

I did give it one extra star for Joanie's family, especially the scene exemplifying "Love is a choice, not a feeling." I think that's the right message to take away from the book.

\*Review based on reread in September 2015

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### **Deb says**

Excellent model of a Christian family.

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### **Audrey says**

This is the kind of book that I knew what would happen even before I cracked open the cover.

First of all, the main characters are too perfect. Although Brandon is initially flawed, after his conversion he begins to fill the role of Dream Man: he's tan, muscular, charming, good-looking, is "superlative" at guitar, has a magnetic personality, is a natural public speaker, was captain and MVP of his high school football team, is great at his job, etc. Joanie is even more cloyingly perfect. She "smiles sweetly" a lot, and apparently—by her own admission—*nothing* ever bothers her (91). In addition, she's excellent at her job, a talented musician and singer, has lovely handwriting, is very beautiful, kids love her, and is great at sports. I want to like her, but she just never feels real. In fact, the only thing that Joanie might lack is fashion sense: overall shorts and a dress worn over a t-shirt are mentioned as two of her style choices (47). I guess this does take place in 1996, though. That's another thing . . . I wonder why the author set the book in 1996 if she wrote it in 2002?

Joanie's family also feels unrealistic. The author seems to purposely play up the big-homeschooling-family stereotypes. They are very into music, spend a lot of time playing cards, and are all talented, beautiful, and/or adorable. They come across as mostly very nice, but it's just too idealized. Even the few moments of family friction seem tacked on and disingenuous.

At times, the writing style is very heavy-handed. Even simple things like getting out of bed are construed with dramatic philosophical meaning: "She was fighting an interior battle against the temptation to stay in her warm bed" (20). Even though I agree with the worldview and religious beliefs of the characters, the teachable elements don't exactly come across seamlessly. One incident I found particularly hard to swallow was Maggie's supernatural knowledge of Brandon's spiritual attack. But, well, maybe I'm just too cynical.

There are also some parts of the book that seem very out of place and left me wondering why the author included them. For example, there's a random paragraph or two about the Collins children expecting a thunderstorm (352). Was that supposed to be a metaphor for something?

When I originally read this book, I was surprised by mentions of guitar playing at Mass and young adult praise and worship events. At the time, I wasn't very familiar with charismatic Catholicism, but that seems to be what their church is. I have no problem with the charismatic movement (my interaction with it has actually been overwhelmingly positive), but when I first read the book I was confused by these aspects.

There is a bit of coarse language in this—not very much, but more than I would expect in a Catholic book. Some of the words may not even be considered swearing, but I'm not sure they were necessary.

It seemed like all the conversions in this happened too fast. Of course God can work in whatever timing He wishes, but it's unrealistic that so many characters would completely change after their single "aha" moment and from then on never really falter. I also wonder what would have happened if Joanie and Brandon's relationship hadn't worked out. Would Brandon stay Catholic? So much of his faith was intertwined with his attachment to Joanie.

I think books like this might cause people to expect too much from a relationship. As mentioned above, Brandon and Joanie are portrayed as pretty near perfect. The story would be more realistic and helpful if it showed the couple working through legitimate challenges together. Of course there is Brandon's past, but he is so clearly over that now, it's almost a non-struggle for him. It's not that I think people should lower their standards—I definitely don't think that—but, well, there has only ever been one perfect person on this earth, and He was God. This article does a better job at conveying what I'm trying to say!

I don't really understand the need to change the name of dating to "courtship." I think it's very possible to have a pure and Christ-centered dating experience. I like the idea of spending lots of time with families and

groups, but I think anyone could incorporate that into their relationship if they wanted to. I don't think *what* it's called is really that important. I did like a lot of the ideas presented in this book, in regard to courtship/dating/whatever-you-call-it, even if the way it was presented wasn't always the most natural. I admire the foundation of friendship and respect, and that is something I definitely want to base my own relationships on. I also appreciated that the couple kept Jesus at the center of their love, and that they fostered a spontaneous relationship with Him throughout the day. To "pray without ceasing" is something that I need to get better at. I often forget to ask God's help or seek His will as I go about my everyday routine. I also liked that they brought up the whole theme of loving someone enough to let him/her go, to truly want what is best for the other person (340). My two favorite quotes from the book were: "By uniting our sufferings to Christ's sacrifice on the cross, Satan is robbed of the power of sin" (342) and "Sometimes to live out love is even harder than to die for love" (343). So there were some good thoughts in the book, but I just found the overall characterization and writing style to be a bit too idealized and preachy.

{Edited: 08/18/15}

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### **Diana says**

FIRST OFF THIS IS HANDS DOWN ONE OF MY FAVOURITE BOOKS .

Now back to the review, i was given this book a few years back by a friend. I can honestly say, the story and the plot were amazing, but i was more connected to the characters.

This love story, about how a beautiful lady falling in love with this man, who at the time wasn't good for her.. End found himself in Christ and became her perfect man with the help of the Lord.

They fought over temptations, and ugh just so touching.

This was a amazing read, and i'm definitely keeping this one, for a very long time; it gives me hope.

Thanks for a amazing novel, I'm surprised not much people have read this.

It deserves to be read, a total life changer for me. I saw love, a bit more differently after this novel.

With the Lord.. he can change all things, and people.

Thank you once again Carmen

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### **Chliara says**

This book is downright AMAZING. The story of Christian courtship in modern world is just astounding. The characters are very real to me; very inspiring. This a book that needs to be put out there, for all to read.

Kudos to Mrs. Marcoux for putting out such a beautiful message of marriage and purity through her writing!!

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