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Gathering Shadows (Finding Sanctuary Book #1)



Synopsis

Wynter Evans is a promising young reporter for a television station in St. Louis, but even a bright future doesn't take away her pain over the disappearance of her brother nine years ago. So when she stumbles across a photograph of a boy with an eerie resemblance to him, she can't pass up the chance to track him down. With research for work as her cover, she sets out with one of the station's photogs for the place where the picture was taken: the town of Sanctuary. Almost as soon as she arrives, she meets the town's handsome young mayor, Rueben King, and together they begin to uncover long held secrets that could tear the small town apart and change everything Wynter thought she knew about her life. As the truth of her family's past hides in the shadows, it's clear someone will stop at nothing to keep the answers she's searching for hidden forever--even if the cost is Wynter's very life.

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Customer Reviews

Wynter Evans wasn't her birth name. It was the name she chose and she used it on the air much as an author might have a pen name. Wynter was a local television news reporter, sent to do a story on unique Missouri towns with photographer Zac, who clearly didn't want to be there. She had decided to include the small, primarily Mennonite community called Sanctuary because of a young Mennonite man that was in a photo that her co-worker Megan's mother had taken. It wasn't just any young man; he looked like an older version of her brother Ryan who had disappeared when he was 7, more than ten years prior. Even though the killer had never confessed to Ryan's murder, the police had chosen to believe that Ryan was one of the young children who had been kidnapped and murdered about the time he was taken. After all these years, Wynter still hopes to be reunited with Ryan. After Ryan's disappearance, her family had fallen apart - her parents divorcing, her father remarried and her mother becoming a shadow of her former self. At the last minute, the boss called and told her to bypass Sanctuary because some of the people there didn't want to be filmed. Choosing to ignore Ed's voicemail, Wynter proceeded to the little town. The librarian who was previously enthusiastic about the visit now said that not only did the Mennonites prefer to not be filmed, but there were others who had moved there for privacy. Reuben, a man acting as an honorary mayor (as much as was acceptable to the Old Order Mennonites) asked her to not take photos or films of anyone without their permission, which Wynter agreed to. He then assisted them in finding a place to stay with Esther, an older widow whose children had moved out. So begins the story - one in which two of the primary characters, Wynter and Zac, are not believers in Christ. One of Esther's conditions for those who stayed in her home was that they attend services with her on Sunday. She told Wynter that she would pray for her situation with her brother. Threats begin to come to Wynter to get out of town. Photos put out by her station that she didn't have take - but had been taken by her phone when she was out to dinner. Then a man was found murdered, and she was considered a person of interest. I very much enjoyed this novel! Nancy Mehl is an accomplished author who can write a great novel of suspense as well as a woman whose Christian maturity shines through her characters. She writes of those who don't yet believe with understanding, and her characters who do believe in Jesus are wise and discerning. Gathering Shadows is a terrific first novel in her Finding Sanctuary series, and already it is clear that this new series is even better than the previous books of Nancy Mehl's that I've read. I highly recommend this novel to older teens and women of any age who appreciate a good novel of romantic suspense with plot twists and challenges to the reader. Those who like reading about the small Mennonite communities as found throughout the US

will definitely enjoy this series. This book was purchased by me and I reviewed this book without compensation of any kind. All opinions are solely mine.

This is a good book that ended too soon. The ending left much to be desired. I'm sure the author did that to lure readers to her next book. I think it's an awful thing to do to her readers.

Such a great read. I love Nancy Mehl. Only one drawback- I was so anxious to get my questions answered past the ending of this book that I immediately started the second. I've finished it and it was equally amazing. However, it never answers questions left from this, the first book. I don't want to give away the book, but there were unanswered things like with the future of her parents and her sibling. I reread the last two chapters a couple of times thinking I'd missed something. I'd still recommend it, but just know you'll have to imagine life past the last chapter.

The prologue of this book quickly drew me in describing Ryan's abduction. This book was somewhat different in that after the prologue, it jumps ten years ahead and Emily (aka Wynter) is the main character. While most believed her brother had been murdered by a serial killer, Wynter knew something was off and she just couldn't let herself believe he was dead. She followed a clue and her heart and used her job as a reporter to go to Sanctuary for a story. Zac, Wynter's photographer, was quite a character and I love the friendship that developed between the two of them- even after Zac tried to sabotage her career. I liked and disliked Sanctuary. I liked the farm life, not locking doors, Ester's country cooking, but I certainly disliked how uninviting the town was to strangers. Reuben, however, cautiously welcomed Wynter and Zac and in the end, I believe the whole town was changed- for the good. Not only the town, but Zac and Wynter...and more changes that I'll leave you to read about. There are many twists throughout the story and I did not figure it out until all the causes came together at the end. This book is definitely worth the read and I look forward to reading more of Nancy Mehl's books.

It took me a bit to get into the plot, pace was slow throughout the book, but ultimately I really liked the mystery aspect of the book and reading Wynter's religious journey as she follows the clues. I thought that while it did take a few chapters to get going, the mystery was well formulated. I equally feel that the religious undertones were perfect; characters did not come across as preachy and quoted scriptures felt natural in the dialogue. Great job. Now the romance with Reuben- it did not feel as natural. It was not insta-love (yah!) but they seemed to lack chemistry during their exchanges.

When he declared his romantic interest in Wynter, it was equal to stating something as generic like..."I like pineapple". Great, got that aspect of the plot out of the way. It felt very matter of fact. Even as the mystery matured and they explored their feelings it was like Wynter accepted his love in a very diplomatic way. Even in a Mennonite faith based book I refuse to believe that love is that... sensible. I don't expect bodice ripping action, but some heightened emotional inflection, some light flirting and more heartfelt dialogue was needed in my opinion. 3.5 rounded up. If you are looking for a quality, faith based, suspenseful mystery with sweet, well fleshed-out supporting characters then this book is for you. Must not mind a slower pace and Must want mystery more than romance.

Thanks!

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