



A Little Ray of Sunshine

Lani Diane Rich

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Emmy James is not the kind of girl who attracts angels. In fact, after she sent her life into a nosedive six years ago, she's tried to attract as little as possible -attention, people, or responsibility. She skips from town to town in an Airstream trailer, working odd jobs and keeping to herself until a sudden whim lets her know it's time to move again.

And this works just fine, until the day two unexpected visitors show up at the New Jersey trailer park she calls home. One is a childhood friend with news: her mother and his father are getting married, and they want EJ to be there. The other is a sweet but odd woman named Jess, who says she's an angel specializing in cosmic relationship mending...and blueberry pancakes. Jess doesn't think it's any coincidence that this is all happening at once, but EJ would rather run herself over with her own Airstream before reconnecting with her neglectful, self-absorbed mother. When she wakes up to find her trailer cruising down the highway with a determined angel at the wheel, however, EJ realizes that sometimes what you want and what the Universe intends for you can be two very different things...

A Little Ray of Sunshine Details

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From Reader Review A Little Ray of Sunshine for online ebook

Carolyn F. says

EJ does a freak out and leaves her fiancee with no explanation. Six years later her fiancee's brother tracks her down because his dad and her former child celebrity mom are getting married and he says her mom won't marry him unless she's there. The same day this happens a girl who claims to be an angel said she's been sent to help her out. Very sweet, sad, funny book. This author is becoming one of my favorites.

Kate George says

I shouldn't have been surprised at the depth of emotion I felt reading A Little Ray of Sunshine by Lani Diane Rich. As a regular reader of Lani's LucyMarch.com blog (Lucy March is the name Lani is currently writing under) I have experienced Lani as a deeply connected, emotionally honest writer. What I thought would be reading was humor, what Lani delivered was so much more. I laughed and cried, but more than that this story stuck with me after I finished it. It is a masterfully written with characters who engage the reader. I highly recommend both the book and the author.

Jacob Proffitt says

A good, straight-forward romance, though with more family drama than most and a satisfying emotional core. Indeed, much of the novel depends on EJ's connection to her partially-surrogate family. Even more hinges on Rich getting EJ's mother right and she set herself quite a job with it. The mom is a selfish one-time child star with little time for her daughter and enough reprehensible incidents in the past to push her past sympathy as a character. Working out a way forward with EJ seems hopeless (and, frankly, unwise), so getting there and remaining at all believable was quite an undertaking. A successful one, I might add.

I ended up enjoying the book, though some of the drama around Jess (the angel) was a little much towards the end. All in all, a good read and a *great* value.

Lisa says

I enjoyed this book; it had fun characterizations and was a good summer read. Unfortunately, I almost didn't get far enough to find that out. I got this on Kindle and the first few pages had a handful of really basic errors and typos, so I very nearly gave it up as a self-pub by someone who didn't take the time to have it edited. (Although, note that as an editor I am super-picky bordering on neurotic, so...)

Luckily, I stuck with it. But I have to say, the whole thing really needed a good copy edit. From what I can tell, though, this actually went through a publisher, so I don't know *what* happened. Maybe it was an issue with the translation into ebook? Probably. In any case, the author is way too good to let these types of errors trip her up, and I hope she'll have a better edit next time.

Cathleen says

This is my first read by this author. This book is a gem. The main character "EJ" is a young woman who has grown up doubting her ability to love and be loveable. EJ's mother is a former child star and spend most of her time ignoring or mocking her only daughter. Emmy James (EJ). EJ runs away from her home town carrying a burdensome secret on her shoulders. She finds herself employed in a dead-end job at a Stop n' Go. One day, towards the end of her work shift she meets Jess. Jess's car stopped working when she arrived at the Stop n' Go to grab a drink. Jess talks EJ into returning home. Convincing her that it is time to return and deal with news she recently received through a childhood friend. With Jess's help, EJ starts to heal and begins to understand, and possibly forgive, her estranged mother.

A fun and poignant read, I really enjoyed this book. There were a lot of questions in my mind while I was reading and I so am that the author effectively resolved all the loose ends by the end of the book.

If you pick up this book thinking you will be reading a typical "Chick Lit" this is not that type of story. The author provides readers with a story full of humorous scenes and colorful imagery, as well as sadness and pain. I found myself laughing and crying at times.

Olga Godim says

This novel touched me deeply, plucked the strings that still reverberate long after I finished the last page. I read it and thought about my life and my relationships with the people I love.

We all make mistakes, hurt others willingly or unwillingly. And sometimes, others hurt us. To live our lives to the full despite the damage to our hearts and souls, we all need forgiveness: to grant it and to receive it. Forgiveness, the absolution of guilt, makes our lives worth living. This story is about one woman's quest to find forgiveness: for those who hurt her as well as for herself.

Emmy is a nomad. She lives in her trailer, works temporary jobs, and moves from place to place along the countless American roads whenever the mood strikes her. She has been doing it for six years, ever since she left home and the man she loved. Now, her mother is getting married, and Emmy is invited to the wedding. And she knows that going there will reopen the wounds that have never healed properly. The hungry, toothy maws of the old hurts gnaw at her heart again. And it bleeds again.

To go or not to go? Drowning in self-doubts, convinced of her utter worthlessness, and afraid to face the people she loved and abandoned, Emmy is lost in her lonely, joyless universe. Until a self-proclaimed **angel** Jess kidnaps Emmy and drives her to the town of her youth, towards forgiveness. If only Emmy finds enough courage to forgive – herself as well as the others, all would be well. Maybe...

Guilt eats at Emmy, as she navigates her bumpy relationships with her mother, her former fiancé, and her current **angel**. Guilt sours her every thought and drives her every action, as Emmy tries to build a new beginning on the ruins of her former life. Reestablishing severed connections is a hard job, fraught with a lot of tears and bouts of torturous self-searching. It is doable, but only if every participant is willing. Fortunately for Emmy, she has an **angel** on her side. How seldom we find such a blessing in real life!

Several fascinating details add verisimilitude to this poignant and emotional tale. One of them is Emmy's obsession with her name: Emmy James. Emmy hates that name. She calls herself EJ. And to forgive her mother, who had neglected her all her life, Emmy needs her mother to call her EJ, to comply with Emmy's self-identification. And the mother resists this demand until the very end of the novel. Such petty defiance on

both their sides, with so much at stake, says volumes about both troubled women and their bitter-sweet kinship.

I have to admit, in this, if in nothing else, I side with the mother. I dislike this custom to use initials in place of a given name. Initials make one seem dry and formal, an entry in a document, whereas a name reflects one's personality, colors, and quirks. A name belongs to a unique individual. Initials imply mass production, at least for me. Besides, Emmy sounds so much better than EJ.

Another peculiarity of this novel is its plentitude of bar jokes: bad, rude, and funny. Both Emmy and her former fiancé seem to communicate through these jokes. They are a symbol of their love, a token of their mutual understanding. Without the jokes, their union would be incomplete.

Invariably, their jokes made me laugh too, and so often my laughter mingled with tears. I cried and I smiled, occasionally at the same time. And although the tears often blurred my vision, I couldn't stop reading. I think it is called catharsis.

I loved this novel.

Hallie says

Of course this is really classifiable as chick-lit, but I hate the term so much, I'm going to be a pain and say it's relationship lit. The family relationship is every bit as important as the romantic one, and maybe more so. This was another of those happy matches for book reading and book mood, and I thoroughly enjoyed it. I especially admired the way that Rich managed to make me convinced that EJ's mother could, just, be redeemed, from a starting point that made that extremely unlikely. I sure hope that EJ tells Luke exactly what was said to her to cause her to walk out on him. Jess was also a great character - especially as seen initially from EJ's cynical, emotionally closed perspective. But then the reason for her slightly off but loveable quirkiness proved to be much more tragic than expected. Sweet and fun read, with a good dash of humour.

Karina says

This was another quick and fun read by a great chick lit author. I highly recommend this for anyone who wants a feel-good read that will make you smile, laugh out loud, and just not want to put the book down...

Hildy says

I have no idea where I saw this book recommended but I put it on my list and put it out of my mind. Then I saw that it was free on Amazon and I thought I'd give it a go. It was such a pleasant surprise. I was really unsure after the first few pages but I kept going and read it all in one day. I have a read a lot of books with a lot of angst and sexy, tattooed bad boys lately and was hoping for something a little different. I picked the right book. It was clever, funny, sweet and touching. There were so many characters to love. It started to slip a bit from about 70-80% but then it picked back up again. I would highly recommend it for someone who is looking for a quick, light read.

Beth Roberts says

This book confirms one of the many reasons I read. It's a simple, three-star, enjoyable read, but within its pages can be found small nuggets of life philosophy. Or at least, a piece of life philosophy I'm willing to pick up and incorporate in my own.

I don't like to rehash plot summaries in book reviews, Instead, I try to simply tell you why I liked it (or didn't) and why I find it worth reading (or not). This is a simple story of family dynamics (or lack thereof). Each of the characters is, of course, humanly flawed in some way.

We are supposed to be manipulated into sympathy for the main character, EJ, and predisposed to disliking her mother. However, the whole thing is artfully designed to bring us to the realization that the mother is just another flawed human being, as is her daughter, and that both are equally compelling characters in the end.

I mentioned philosophy, and coming from a pretty flawed family dynamic myself, I found several things redeeming in this book. At one point, however, the mother says something to the effect that when other people say horrible things to someone they are supposed to care about, it's not really about the person to whom those things are said, but rather a reflection of the flaws of the speaker.

That statement hit me like a ton of bricks. Looking back on years of verbal abuse, it all takes on a whole new light, and only reinforced the thoughts trying hard to coalesce in my own head: what if it wasn't my fault?

That's really the whole setup behind this novel: a bunch of people appearing to blow off their own faults and actions to blame on others, when really, they are all walking around blaming themselves in their own heads. Emotionally, nothing is what it seems.

So, all in all, pretty true-to-life, huh? This is my second novel from this author. Truthfully, I enjoyed the first ("The Fortune Quilt") more, but I still think this is a solidly entertaining light read. Like most novels of this sort, you wish you could be with these people in real life, and everything wraps up neatly in a tearfully lovely happy ending. Unlike real life, these folks are not like any I really know, and I don't really count on those amazing romantic, throw-everything-out-the-window for the perfect fairy tale ending.

But hey, it's nice to suspend reality for a little while. And it's nice when the Universe decides to throw you a bone of wisdom in the guise of an entertaining little book you picked up for free.

Tammy says

Emmy James has lived in an Airstream trailer for six years, taking odd jobs and keeping to herself. Things change when a childhood friend shows up to tell her that her mother - a Hollywood Diva and major drama queen - is getting married to his father. To complicate things, a very odd woman also shows up, claiming to be an angel who specializes in relationship-mending and blueberry pancakes. Emmy ultimately decides against going to the wedding and refuses to deal with the past. Imagine her surprise when she wakes up the next morning to find her Airstream trailer hooked up to her truck, cruising down the highway!

A Little Ray of Sunshine was a fun and poignant book that I thoroughly enjoyed. A real page-turner. I could not put it down and ended up reading it in one afternoon.

This book was laugh-out-loud funny. I kid you not! Emmy's thought patterns had me rolling at times. The conversations that take place between Emmy and her mother were hysterical. The reconciliations and lessons learned made me cry. The twists in the story kept me riveted to the book. And the reunion romance between Emmy and her former fiance' was beautiful. (One of my favorites by far!) Please note that the romance was not the main focus of the book, but it was a very sweet and satisfying story nonetheless. Emmy and Luke communicated in a very unique way. Very little had to be said between them. Just the way he stared at her when they were in the same room was enough to warm my blood and leave me begging for more.

After my last disappointing read by this author, my expectations were low. *Very low*. Thankfully my expectations were shattered and I was left with a sappy grin on my face. Her writing style is very similar to Jennifer Crusie, while her sense of humor reminds me of Sophie Kinsella. I'm impressed - this book has made it to my keeper shelf. I'm sure I'll be reading it again in the very near future.

Rosina Lippi says

Rich takes a turn toward the serious in a romance where the primary focus is a mother-daughter relationship. Emmy James is a nomad, living out of her Airstream, working odd jobs until she gets the urge to move on. She's been living this way for six years when she crosses paths with Jess, a young woman who declares herself Emmy's angel, sent by the universe to help her with her problems. At the same time, Digs shows up, a childhood friend who would now be her brother-in-law if Emmy hadn't left his brother Luke without an explanation. Digs's news is disturbing: His father Danny and Emmy's mother, a former child star, are getting married. Lilly Lorraine is vain, cruel, narcissistic, destructive, all the things that Danny is not. Emmy is shocked and determined to stay away from the wedding, but her angel knows what's best and Emmy wakes up the next morning to find the Airstream headed home. While the story of Emmy's lost love is engaging, the heart of the story has to do with the transformation Emmy sees -- but doesn't trust -- in her mother. If Emmy is to take back her life and reconnect with Luke, she must first deal with the old mother and accept the new one. The process is painful and at times, funny, but Danny, Digs and Jess -- who plays a role nobody anticipated -- are there to keep things on track. The characters skate right to the edge of believability at times, but the romance -- quiet, sweet -- is very real. A thoughtful, well told story with an unusual twist.

Chanouel says

Wow! What a little gem this book was. Loved it, couldn't put it down. It's categorized as "chick-lit" which is not my favorite genre but after reading it, I'm not sure exactly how I would categorize it.

Yes, there is a love story, but the book is so much more than that. Mother/daughter relationship, redemption, forgiveness, tragedy...all wrapped up in a neatly tied-up story.

I love the humor and sarcasm of EJ, the main character. The story is told in the first person, through EJ's point of view. She is sharp, witty, angry, sensitive and the Queen of Sarcasm. I loved her from the first paragraph.

Despite the reader only getting one point of view to the story, through EJ's eyes, Rich did an amazing job of giving the other characters enough dimension to make them as likeable as EJ herself.

Do youself a favor, don't pass this one up!

Lynda says

I first saw this book at Target eight months ago and thought about buying and then put it back. I finally bought it about a week ago at Barnes and Noble.

I loved this story. I loved the characters and their struggles. It made me laugh out loud, it made me cry a little and overall just a touching story. It is a beach read, so don't expect to make any life changing self discoveries but definetly a fun book!

Jenni says

A Little Ray of Sunshine by Lani Diane Rich is one of my favorite books to reread. The story starts with EJ living on the road in an Airstream constantly running away from her past and her regrets. That all changes when Jess's car breaks down at the gas station where EJ works and Jess decides this means she's supposed to help EJ. That night EJ's childhood friend shows up to tell EJ that she's expected to show up for her mother's eight wedding, this one with Digs's father as the groom. Going back will mean facing a mother who ignored EJ for most of her childhood and facing the man she had been engaged to before she left home. I enjoy EJ's narration, but I decided I was hooked the first time I read Jess explaining how she had to kidnap EJ and her Airstream. Watching these two as they make their cross country journey and then face the changes that have happened during the six years EJ's been gone is so much fun. I adore watching these characters interact and grow, and come back to them time and again. A fulfilling women's journey with lots of laughs.
