



Raspberries and Vinegar

Valerie Comer

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Josephine Shaw: complex, yet singleminded. A tiny woman with big ideas and, some would say, a mouth to match. But what does she really know about sustainable living as it relates to the real world? After all, she and her two friends are new to farming.

Zachary Nemesek is back only until his dad recovers enough to work his own land again. When Zach discovers three helpless females have taken up residence at the old farm next door, he expects trouble. But a mouse invasion proves Jo has everything under control. Is there anything she can't handle? And surely there's something sweet beneath all that tart.

Raspberries and Vinegar Details

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Author : Valerie Comer

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From Reader Review *Raspberries and Vinegar* for online ebook

Narelle says

I really enjoyed reading *Raspberries and Vinegar*. Jo and Zach are fascinating characters who are drawn to each other despite having different life philosophies. Jo and her friends, Claire and Sierra, are intent on 'practicing what they preach' by creating a sustainable living farm. Their beliefs regarding sustainable living and decreasing their carbon footprint have a Biblical foundation. The girls are prepared to make sacrifices, including temporarily living in a rundown caravan with an ongoing mice problem, to fulfill their dream of creating a sustainable farm. They also strive to engage the local community in learning about how they can live in a more sustainable way.

Zach enjoys the culture and convenience of city living. He grew up on the farm next door to Jo and the girls, and is only back in town temporarily to help his mother while his father recovers from a serious illness. At the start of the story Zach can't understand why Jo and her friends are determined to create a new life on the farm.

Sparks fly whenever Jo and Zach are together, and an adorable pup called Domino creates a lot of mischief in the story. *Raspberries and Vinegar* is a fun romance that addresses important issues without being preachy. The story is contemporary and touches on issues that are relevant to twenty-somethings in today's society. Both Jo and Zach experience character growth during the story and the plot twists kept me turning the page to find out what happens next. I highly recommend this book to those looking for an exciting and inspiring contemporary romance.

Margaret Fisk says

Originally published on Tales to Tide You Over

I had the privilege of being a beta reader for this novel. Even then, in a much less polished form, Jo captured my heart and my attention. She, along with her two college friends, is determined to honor God by being a true caretaker of the planet. What this means to them is that they're beginning a sustainable living farm where they plan to live and teach others ways to reduce the impact of humanity on the natural world.

As it sounds, she's a bit of a fanatic. Jo's driven, sometimes blind. Adamant in her faith and how she's chosen to express that faith.

Along comes Zach, current generation of a long-term farming family. He's lived the farmer's life growing up and seen how sustainable it isn't. He has his hopes set on a city job, using the veterinarian degree he's worked so hard to earn on pampered pets in return for culture and an easy life with modern conveniences...which include dining out whenever he gets hungry, often enough on fast food.

Zach begins the novel as a reluctant hero, home temporarily to help his mother after his father is afflicted with a serious immune disorder. He has one foot out the door, unwilling to commit to any significant length of time because it will delay his plans even more than they've already been hindered by a failed relationship with his former boss's daughter.

That these two have nothing in common is obvious...or is it?

Valerie manages to take a fanatical character and teach Jo there's more to life than her goals, while also giving her reason to consider whether brow-beating is the best approach to teach better caretaking. She also delves into poor Zach who needs to see beyond the superficial to understand what's really in his heart in terms of his life plans, love, and faith. He needs to see beyond the struggles to the strengths to be found in a small community where people stand by each other.

This is both a sweet boy meets girl story and so much more, offering a look at how people's relationships with God affect their outlook along with an evaluation of how different choices have an impact on our environment. There is no question that this is an inspirational romance. The faith message is strong, so if that's a turn off, be forewarned. The environmental message, focused on local produce and understanding where our food comes from, is also strong. But don't let me give the impression that the book is a message book rather than a story. The messages it offers are firmly within the perspectives of the various characters as they try to establish who they want to be and how they want to interact with others, the Earth, and God. They face trials of faith, of body, and of heart as they struggle to meet the challenges life offers without losing hope or giving up.

I'm happy to see this series published so that we can share in the journey of a bunch of interesting people doing interesting things as they balance faith and relationships to find their place in the world.

P.S. I received a copy of this book in return for an honest review. I hope you enjoy Jo and Zach's story as much as I have.

Tammi says

I regret starting this book and only read it a little past the halfway point. I should have stopped 50 pages in, but I've never not finished a Christian fiction novel. I could not take the environmental, do-gooder message throughout the book. While I love gardening and farmer's markets, I am mature enough to realize the importance of the traditional American Farmer who feeds the world. This book is anti-farming and anti-beef production unless you are growing a little organic garden and raising grass fed beef. One of the characters regretted her father was a truck driver for a major grocery store transporting Florida oranges across the country. Really? Because people in North Dakota don't deserve to eat oranges because they can't grow them locally. Seriously, I cannot take this mindset. I have difficulty fathoming how any freedom loving American can give this type of ideology 5 stars.

Rita says

This interesting genre really is unique. It's nice to read something with a new twist. It has a lighthearted beginning and then, before you know it, the storyline covers some serious issues most of us will face in our lives.

I like the independent heroine because she doesn't cave in when things are very difficult ... I certainly wouldn't have hung in there at her age when things were so creepy! The rapport between the girlfriends is

natural especially when a little jealousy sneaks in, but girls will be girls!

The hero acts just as any man worth his salt would act when faced with three females on an unpopular mission, despite the fact he finds himself attracted to the most stubborn, but most appealing one of them. And as in most romances the misunderstandings and misconceptions are hilarious.

A good read, Valerie. I really enjoyed this book and read it in one sitting. And the 'icing on the cake' is the recipe for this unusual but refreshing beverage.

Paula Vince says

Josephine Shaw, a young nutritionist, and her two friends have embarked on their dream of setting up a sustainable lifestyle farm in a country town, but it will be a long process. The mouse plague in their temporary portable trailer home is just the start.

Jo is so passionate about treading lightly on the planet that she tends to do just the opposite with people, coming across as overbearing and pushy in her zeal to convince others to live as healthily and thoughtfully as she does.

Zach Nemesek is the next door neighbours' handsome son. He's a fully qualified vet anxious to secure himself a city job, yet he's helping his parents out with the running of their farm until his dad is back on his feet from a long illness. Zach appreciates the convenience of the occasional take-away meal and junk food.

I really liked the romance. Zach is a lovely fellow and I looked forward to the parts from his point of view. It might be easy to wonder whether he could find himself a more easygoing match than Jo, but he'd find it hard to discover somebody who would adore him as much as she does. She keeps trying to convince herself that she has no future with him, yet I almost wanted to start counting the number of times she sees him passing the time of day with other women, jumps to the wrong conclusion and storms off, devastated. Gotta love her.

Along with the lightheartedness and humour in this book are some tear-jerking moments of touching sadness. The ethical considerations the story raises are thought-provoking too.

I'd been looking forward to getting stuck into this book, as I enjoy novels with 'foody' themes. They add a good dimension. Although this one didn't end up with the huge town feast they were planning, I'm hoping it will take place in one of the sequels, which I expect will be about Claire and Sierra and their romances. I love Valerie Comer's warm, easy and humorous style of writing, so I'll grab those for sure.

Meanwhile, I'll definitely try the raspberry vinegar recipe.

Lucy Thompson says

I recommend Valerie Comer's book, "Raspberries and Vinegar".

Sweet romance, cute characters, a fun setting, and lots of lifestyle choices that made me think about the way I live.

I read a lot of books and I don't see that combination very often! (Or at all).
Very well written, I enjoyed Valerie's voice, and she frequently made me laugh out loud.
Plus, there is a delicious recipe for raspberry vinegar cordial included that I'm dying to try! :-)

Janet Sketchley says

What happens when three 20-something single Christian women buy a farm in northern Idaho and set out to demonstrate their beliefs about sustainable living?

The farm is called Green Acres, but unlike Lisa from the classic TV show, Jo Shaw and her friends Claire and Sierra have done their research and are up to the task.

Mostly up to the task. There's the small matter of a mouse infestation in their temporary dwelling, but Jo's sure they can handle it.

She's not so sure she can handle their attractive neighbour, Zach. He's only home to care for his parents' farm until his father's health improves, and he can't wait to get back to the city. The girls see all the pluses of rural living, but he sees only minuses. They eat ethically-sourced food; he'll hit the drive-thru any chance he gets. Jo doesn't think she stands a chance with him anyway, against her friend Sierra's charms.

Jo, at 25, is only beginning to see the world's not as black and white as she thinks. And she knows her subject so thoroughly, she forgets the average person doesn't share her knowledge. When she remembers, she tries to fully educate the person on the spot.

Author Valerie Comer does a great job making Jo a likable character instead of the opinionated shrew she could have been. Jo's just like any of us: passionate about something that matters to her. And like us, she sometimes reacts first and regrets later. She's a vulnerable character, despite her spunk.

As a boy, Zach loved the farm but hated the low income level. He's a newly-qualified veterinarian, looking for a lucrative city post with civilized hours and no cows. Somewhere along the way, his faith has been pushed to the side. Coming home may get him thinking about it again.

Something about these characters connected with me. Maybe it's Jo's second-guessing herself, or how she's so quick to compare herself to others (always to her loss). Maybe it's Zach's trying to be an honourable man in his own strength. Maybe it's both of them, carrying loads they were never intended to shoulder alone.

Like Zach, I don't know much about "walking gently on the earth," and I found lots to think about in this book. The information flows organically (couldn't resist that pun) as the story unfolds, and it doesn't stop the forward motion of the plot.

The novel's humour offsets Jo's serious nature, and there are some heart-tugging moments too. This is a longer romance than you'd see from Love Inspired, so the author had more room to explore her characters and readers can get to know them on a deeper level. Definitely a plus, in my view.

My favourite line (said to Jo by Zach's grandmother):

"God loves your zeal, I'm sure, but He wants your heart." [Kindle Location 3528]

Jo does love God, but—like many of us—she has a few control issues. So does Zach, for that matter, and one of the novel's threads is how they're each confronted with the need to let go of control and let God be God.

Canadian author Valerie Comer is quietly passionate about food, faith and fiction. *Raspberries and Vinegar* is the first in a three-novel farm lit series called "A Farm Fresh Romance." She also has a geo-caching romance novella in the collection, *Rainbow's End*. For more, visit Valerie Comer's website. Or click to read a sample from *Raspberries and Vinegar*.

This week only, buy a print copy of *Raspberries and Vinegar* and **get bonus material**:

[Review copy provided by the author.]

Tara says

Sassy and sweet, this romantic story will charm it's way into your heart. Josephine moves to the country with her friends to pursue a simpler life, not expecting to meet a young man who sparks her interest, but has his sights set on returning to the city. Despite misunderstandings and differences, love blossoms and overcomes life's barriers.

Many readers will relate to Josephine's insecurities and inner turmoil as she struggles with doubts about her feelings, self worth and life path. As the lives of several characters unfold we see the reward of choosing a life consistent with God's will, starkly contrasted to a life lived apart from Him and the consequences of choices made accordingly.

Until I read this book, I'd never heard of "farmlit," and didn't know what to expect. Romantic, fun, with refreshing values, and small town atmosphere, readers will enjoy this romp on the farm!

Nancee says

Three recent college graduates set out to change the world! Environmental purists, they purchased property in northern Idaho with plans to live a sustainable lifestyle. Unhindered by husbands or children the young women forge ahead only to discover their temporary home to be an old, filthy, mouse-infested, and dilapidated mobile home. The one benefit is indoor plumbing! Jo is convinced that the three of them can make a go of it and prove to the community that they can make a difference. The talk of the town is that they're a bit on the crazy side. A young veterinarian, Zach grew up on the farm next door to the property which formerly belonged to his grandmother, and he has no use for what the girls have planned. Fast food and a sporty car are what sustain this guy! His goals are to land a position as veterinarian in a city practice, living the good life and making big bucks! Unfortunately his puppy finds the girls enchanting, and routinely escapes his dog run to spend time with Jo and her roommates. Jo sees Zach as an attractive guy who makes her heart beat a little faster, but his lifestyle and lack of respect for the environment OR his diet set Jo's teeth on edge. The plot thickens, and numerous events create laughter, tears and hope for a better tomorrow with a little help from above.

Valerie Comer has created a remarkably unique, creative and very entertaining book in the Christian fiction sub-genre labeled "farm lit." This isn't any ordinary Christian romance. It's an environmentally friendly experience! Based on sustainable living and being friendly to the environment, this book is so much more than I expected. There is humor, romance, tragedy and an underlying Christian foundation that appeals to a wide variety of readers. The author has created an atmosphere of authenticity and honesty that evokes an abundance of emotions. I highly recommend this book if you're up for a belly laugh, a good cry, and a feel-good sense of entertainment. I look forward to the sequels to this book. I can hardly wait to see what Valerie has up her sleeve in the next installments in this creative series.

Disclaimer: I received a digital copy of this book from the author in exchange for my honest review. All opinions expressed are my own, and no monetary compensation was received for this review.

Christine Lindsay says

Raspberries and Vinegar--a farm fresh romance by Valerie Comer is a hoot of a gentle Christian romance. If you like a wholesome, sweet romance, that will make you chuckle, then I highly recommend this book. I use the word wholesome in a tongue-in-cheek way, because the main character, Josephine Shaw, is a nutritionist who takes organic, healthy food seriously, as well as her faith and her desire to take care of the environment.

So when Jo finds herself attracted to Zach Nemesek, who is a self-admitted junk-food addict, she doesn't think there's a hope for the two of them, especially when he seems more interested in her extremely pretty best friend.

I thoroughly enjoyed this contemporary farming story. Being a reader who enjoys good food, and the beauties of farming country, gardening, canning, quilting, then this debut novel by Valerie Comer is a real delight.

I look forward to this author's next book.

Sherida Stewart says

Raspberries and Vinegar-A Farm Fresh Romance, by Valerie Comer, is refreshing to read.

With believable characters, good pacing and a faith thread running throughout, Valerie has written an "opposites attract" romance, showing that every person and every issue is composed of multiple shades of positives and negatives. As in real life, there are sad moments in this story and joyful celebrations. If we let God direct us, our dreams can become something much more than we imagined.

The last line is perfect, but please don't peek ahead!

I'm looking forward to two more books in Valerie's Farm Fresh series.

*I was graciously given an ebook. This is my honest review.

Andrea Cox says

FTC Disclosure: I won a copy of this book many years ago. A review of any sort was not required. These are my honest thoughts.

What I loved:

- * plot twists galore
- * intriguing supporting cast
- * treehouse

What I disliked:

- * lesbian comments
- * abrasive, pushy, overbearing leading lady
- * one profane word
- * leads that hate each other yet suddenly end up in the throes of a passionate kiss, then fall in love while still hating each other (the romance made no sense to me)
- * melodrama

I'm terribly disappointed in this one, because I've been looking forward to reading it for years and the author has been kind to me on her social media and at online book parties. I hope others will enjoy this book.

Catherine J says

Raspberries and Vinegar is the perfect title for a book that is as tart in conflicts as it is sweet—or perhaps I should say, sizzling, in romance.

Jo Shaw is an ecologically aware, pint-sized heroine who did not intend to fall in love when she moves with two girlfriends to start their sustainable farm, Green Acres. Zach Nemesek is the way-too-attractive neighbour who has a love of way-too-many things that go right against Jo's ecological ideals.

R & V shows the clash of these two likeable characters and the inescapable romance that ensues. Valerie Comer has given that spark of attraction between characters that creates a page turner.

Jo is a character with many issues. At times I would get cross and want to argue with her—but then the story would accomplish that for me. In the end, I could not help but like her spunk, and be glad that Zach saw that her strengths outweighed her weaknesses. Zach experiences his own internal battles that he overcomes and I was satisfied as a reader to have all this tied up in the end.

While the book has plenty of supporting characters I never felt overwhelmed by them, rather that each helped create the setting of a small farming community where everyone knows their neighbour. For the romance genre, I would have preferred more scenes of Jo and Zach interacting throughout the middle portion of this book; however the tension and personal motivations of both kept me turning the pages. For me, more scenes with the main characters together would have deepened the ending and increased the validity of their final decisions. However, the ending was satisfying.

There were some well-developed sub-plots in R & V and excellent foreshadowing of events. There was even that sharp intake of breath that shows you have truly been caught by surprise. The book was well edited with no major flaws to pull me out of an enjoyable story.

I'm giving this four stars and I will be reading the next in the farm fresh series—those well-woven sub plots in Raspberries and Vinegar has left my romantic heart imagining where the series will lead to next. Recommended.

Julie Arduini says

A Farm Fresh Romance Series:

A Farm Fresh Romance. This unique farm lit series follows the adventures, romantic and otherwise, of three college graduates who move onto a reclaimed farm where they plan to take the rural area by storm with their sustainable lifestyle and focus on local foods.

Raspberries and Vinegar:

Josephine Shaw: complex, yet singleminded. A tiny woman with big ideas and, some would say, a mouth to match. But what does she really know about sustainable living as it relates to the real world? After all, she and her two friends are new to farming.

Zachary Nemesek is back only until his dad recovers enough to work his own land again. When Zach discovers three helpless females have taken up residence at the old farm next door, he expects trouble. But a mouse invasion proves Jo has everything under control. Is there anything she can't handle? And surely there's something sweet beneath all that tart.

Raspberries and Vinegar is the debut book from Choose NOW publishing, an issue-driven company, and Valerie Comer's farm lit series is a perfect fit. In Raspberries and Vinegar, Jo comes on the scene passionate about eating healthy and growing foods the right way.

Zach's grandma, in his mind, has earned the right to a little chocolate now and then. But when Jo's day job includes making sure his grandma stays healthy, it's just one more issue that seems to divide the two.

I absolutely adored this book. Farm Lit is a refreshing genre that I think is long overdue. As our country plunges into darker and more troubling times, it is books like Raspberries and Vinegar that remind us of what's important. Valerie crafts a strong romance with a current message without beating readers over the head. The characters aren't perfect and neither are their paths. What I especially enjoyed was that writers can often tell what's happening next, we're just wired that way. When I'm stumped, I love it. Raspberries and Vinegar took me places I never saw coming. That is a very good thing.

Each December I pick my favorite reads of the year and right now Raspberries and Vinegar is a top contender. If you love strong characters, a great message, a clean romance and the country, this book is for you.

Paula Lynn says

What is a locavore and farm girl to do when she finds a farm lit romance available on the market? Get a copy and review it! That's what I'm doing here for *Raspberries and Vinegar*, written by Valerie Comer.

Spunky Josephine Shaw has dedicated herself to a sustainable lifestyle and is no less than fanatical about it. She and two of her friends, Sierra and Claire, recently graduated from college and purchased a tract of land in northern Idaho they affectionately call Green Acres where they are building a straw bale house and living off the land. Unpredictable, argumentative and somewhat stubborn, Josephine is bound and determined to defeat the mice infesting their mobile home and to convince the residents of their new town, Galena Landing, to eat a menu consisting of organic, locally grown food.

The friends' new neighbor, Zachary Nemesek, is jobless, and his friend, Gabe, senses he's drifting and encourages him to ask God what He wants. Zach doesn't believe he's drifting, he has a couple of employment prospects, feels God is ignoring him and that praying is like talking to a brick wall, and he doesn't see the point in it anymore. Even though he grew up in a Christian home, he and God aren't on speaking terms any longer. He sees himself as an honest man, a trustworthy man, but wonders if he can ever become a God-centered man. In recent years, he hasn't been in the habit of talking with God, and fears if he gives in, then God is going to want to meddle in every facet of his life, and he's definitely not up for that.

Dead set on city living, Zach temporarily puts his dreams aside to help his parents run their farm during his father's prolonged illness and convalescence. He doesn't like rural life or living in a dead-end town, and he can't wait to be gone from Galena Landing. He longs live and work in the city as a veterinarian where he believes life won't be so hard.

Even though Jo admires the way Zach tenderly interacts with his grandmother, an elderly woman she takes care of in her new job at the local care facility, she doesn't believe they'd ever be compatible, not with his attitude toward farming and living in a rural community. Their differences abound and are magnified in Josephine's mind as she makes comparisons between the two of them. Zach uses Styrofoam and eats greasy, calorie-laden fast food while she cooks from scratch and eats as organically as possible. She majored in holistic medicine and is all about herbs and natural remedies, while he prefers modern medicine and prepackaged meals. Will their attitudes regarding food choices, their relationship and dependence upon God, and their personal views on rural living hinder or help the romantic connection between them? She's convinced he can't stand her and is secretly trying to undermine her attempts at the nursing home to serve his grandmother good, whole food. He brings his grandmother treats of candy and fast food, while Jo is doing her utmost to make sure the residents have healthy snack choices. Polar opposites, they are attracted to each other, but she wants a man who walks with God, who values rural life and the work of God's hands. Zach has chosen to find a job in the city and live a life of convenience and comfort.

Zach thinks Josephine is a softie beneath all the bristle, but they struggle to agree on what constitutes healthy eating and the benefits of rural living. He believes she is a high-and-mighty environmentalist snob and definitely doesn't think they're a match made in heaven. He knows where he stands with her and knows he's not good enough and never will be good enough for her. He struggles with his attraction to her and wonders if she is worth everything to him. Could he stay in Galena Landing for her and give up on his own dreams? He fears he will never be good enough, never environmental enough, never green enough to live up to her standards.

At one time, Zach had experienced peace and joy in being right with God and now longs to find his way back to Him. Despite rubbing each other the wrong way on so many levels, both he and Jo come to realize putting their hopes and dreams into God's hands will cause the future to work itself out. Being right with God is what really matters, a concept neither of them has considered in a long time. God expects them to do everything within His power, not their own.

This book was really fun and entertaining to read, and I'm looking forward to the next story from Valerie Comer's pen. Please note I was given a free copy of Raspberries and Vinegar in exchange for my honest review.
