



Rising Darkness

Nancy Mehl

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Sophie Wittenbauer left her strict Mennonite hometown under a cloud of shame and regret. Certain she's left her past far behind her, she's now focused on her job at a newspaper and is shocked when she stumbles upon the name of someone she knew in her old life. But when she learns the man--a prisoner--claims a suspect from a decades-old unsolved crime is hiding out in the small town of Sanctuary, Missouri, she can't resist following the lead in hopes of furthering her career.

Almost immediately upon her arrival, Sophie's confronted with a face from her past and fears her intention of using a false identity to investigate is doomed. But with the help of Sanctuary's charismatic young pastor, Sophie knows she's getting close. Will she be able to conceal the truth of her own past long enough to find the suspect before someone puts a stop--fatal or otherwise--to her investigation?

"Romantic suspense at its best, with an engaging plot that's not overpowering. Mehl is an amazing author who writes believable stories, knows what fans expect and does not disappoint."-- **RT Book Reviews**

Rising Darkness Details

Date : Published October 27th 2015 by Bethany House Publishers

ISBN :

Author : Nancy Mehl

Format : Kindle Edition 320 pages

Genre : Romance, Mystery, Suspense, Christian Fiction, Contemporary, Christian, Fiction

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From Reader Review Rising Darkness for online ebook

Holly says

From the opening pages I found this story interesting. The characters had a depth to them that made me not only enjoy them but relate to them. The story had several facets to it that kept my attention throughout.

I found Sophie was an extremely interesting character. The author revealed aspects about her throughout the story. It kept me guessing what her secrets were. Jonathan was also interesting but didn't hold quite as many secrets. The author did a great job developing their relationship. At one point I was so caught up in their story I had forgotten Sophie's purpose for being in Sanctuary.

The story was very good and kept me guessing. I did have some of my suspicions confirmed but was blindsided by other aspects. That fact made this a very enjoyable story.

Even more than the story was the message. This story tells of God's forgiveness and how He can heal the dark places in our lives. It also wrestles with the struggle that many face in regards to the terrible things that "Christians" do to others. Where Sophie ends the story is a very realistic place. Another kudo to the author for keeping it real.

This book does appear to be part of a series, but I didn't feel lost. It did make me want to read other books in the series and by this author.

Disclaimer: I received this book free from the publisher in exchange for an unbiased and honest review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.

Karla says

This is the third in Nancy Mehl's series, entitled "Finding Sanctuary". Although it can be read as a stand alone, I would highly recommend the reading of the previous two in the series. It gives the reader a greater understanding of this very unique community and the type of people who reside there. All three of these books are full of intrigue, mystery and suspense and yes, even romance.

This book is one that makes the reader think. It is a story of learning to trust, allowing the past to remain there, not determining our future. God holds us in His hands and as difficult as it may be, we must turn to him and let him carry out His plan for us.

The setting of this book is unique and very different. It is a small community that is occupied by many of the Mennonite faith. There are mysteries that seem to be hidden in many of the resident's pasts and that where they stay- in the past! Seemingly forgotten! Sanctuary is a town that appears to be oh so peaceful, but is it really what it seems??

The characters are realistic and well described, such that you easily identify with them and feel their every challenge and fear. I trembled along with Sophie as she met with frightening memories of her past. Can she turn to God and let Him deal with her regrets and shames?? Or, will she let these memories form her future?? It is up to her!!

The plot is full of twists and turns that keep the reader intrigued from beginning to end. Mysterious events

keep one on the edge of their seat as the feeling of suspense mounts and grows!! Romance is present, intricately woven into this tale.

Nancy Mehl's talent at building the tension and suspense is outstanding. Her unique writing style keeps readers totally engaged in the plot.

A five star book!! I highly recommend this book to all readers!! Take a chance, try something different!!

This book was provided by the author in exchange for a fair and honest review.

Becky says

Most Relatable Romantic Suspense I've Read!!

I absolutely LOVE Nancy Mehl's romantic suspense stories. Rising Darkness, her latest, is no exception. While part three of a series, it can be read as a stand-alone.

"Why did I have to revisit my nightmares to achieve my dreams?" moans Sophie Bauer, AKA "Emily McClure." Fleeing the Mennonite town of Kingdom and an upbringing that was horrendous, "Emily" decides to locate armored car robber Terrance Chase. This will take her to another small mostly Mennonite town and could catapult her to fame, if "Emily" can scoop the story for her newspaper.

The town of Sanctuary is a mixed bag. Some people "Emily" meets prove to be a surprising blessing, while others just wear masks like "Emily." Will "Emily"/Sophie be able to unmask the truly dangerous persons, or will they put a tragic end to her masquerade first?

I love the way Nancy Mehl uses main characters that could be the average young man or woman. They don't possess any superpowers or special skills, although one possesses a great faith in God and one has many obstacles to overcome.

A wonderful story of anger towards God, God's presence amidst tragedy, His faithful love, forgiveness, and peace.

I gratefully received this book from bookfun.org in exchange for an honest review.

Pianosue says

An interesting story. Sophie left her Mennonite hometown under a cloud of shame and regret. She has become a reporter. She goes to Sanctuary to find a murdered and thief. She assumes the name of Emily McClure so she can investigate. She is doing research but is being threatened. Who is trying to scare her? She runs into a young pastor who she realizes she knew from her hometown. Will she be able to conceal the truth from him? or will she convince him to help her find the man she is looking for? Will they survive the investigation? There are a few twists and turns.

Debbie says

"Rising Darkness" by Nancy Mehl is a mystery and fiction but it has a spiritual lesson about how God leads us and how holding onto the past only hinders us from moving forward. I have all three books in the (Finding Sanctuary series) and this book is my favorite of the six (yes I read the three books in the Road to Kingdom) that I have read!

This book has lots of twists this reader did not see coming! This book moved right along with no slow parts, like some books have to just fill up the pages to make it a longer book.

This book is about murder and a robbery, but this book is still a great book and yes it is a Christian book.

This books shows that our past doesn't always hinder our future if you only let forgiveness take place.

I recommend this book to all readers of the mystery, romance and Mennonite genres.

"Rising Darkness" by Nancy Mehl is the third book in the (Finding Sanctuary series) and is quite enjoyable without reading the other two in the series, but I recommend reading the other two as well. I only say this because an incident involving Sophie is mentioned in the book as well as other characters from the series. Even if you don't read the other two you can enjoy this book! You won't be wondering or at a loss because you didn't read the first two.

I really like the ending to "Rising Darkness".

I have given "Rising Darkness" five stars.

Jennifer says

This is a really good series!

Pam Graber says

Sophie Wittenbauer left the Mennonite enclave of Kingdom, KS, under a shroud of shame. Nine years later, she's still trying to bolster her self-esteem with New Age affirmations. She's come a long way from the frumpy, abused daughter of the town pariah. So why does it only take one step into another Mennonite town, Sanctuary, to undo all the work she's done?

Jonathon Weise left Kingdom shortly after Sophie. Disillusioned by the way she was treated and his inability to help her, he finds a new home as pastor of the Agape Fellowship church in Sanctuary. When a newcomer named Emily McClure comes to town to search her ancestry, he feels like he knows her from somewhere. The only other girl he ever knew with amber eyes was Sophie but this girl looks nothing like her - except for the eyes. Could he be seeing things?

On the trail of a killer, Sophie is looking for the break she needs to get off the wedding/obituary beat and into

crime reporting for the St. Louis Herald. Can she keep herself and her heart safe when the killer finds her and she finds her first love living in Sanctuary?

Nancy Mehl's suspense never fails to grip. *Rising Darkness* is her third novel set in Sanctuary. Since I am Mennonite, I'm always jarred a little bit by her characterization of the Mennonites in Kingdom. The Mennonites I know are much more like those in Sanctuary - kind, giving, Christ-followers. I completely get why Sophie would turn away from the God that is worshipped in Kingdom - and why she would return to the God worshipped in Sanctuary.

If you love suspense, flawed, questioning characters and a light dose of romance, *Rising Darkness* is the book for you I've read all 3 books in the series but I don't think you have to in order to enjoy each one.

Jeanie says

This exciting novel is a Must Read for anyone who appreciates Christian suspense. It is third in the Finding Sanctuary series by Nancy Mehl. The mystery and suspense, compounded with what happens when one comes face-to-face with their past. This can be read as a standalone, and when you discover what a great story it is, you will want to read the first two.

Sophie Wittenbauer was raised in Kingdom, a strict Mennonite home and hometown. She probably would never consider returning to the Mennonite church, and would not have gone ever returned had she not had to go to nearby Sanctuary while trying to locate a murderer on the lam. If she could find him, based on information given to her by someone she used to know who is in prison, she would be able to write an article that would seal her future as an investigative reporter instead of an obituary writer.

Facts led her to Sanctuary with an alias, several days off from her newspaper and a shaky cover story. Sanctuary had been the kind of place where many people went because they needed a fresh start, and their backgrounds were not required to be known if they needed the privacy. On one hand it was the perfect place for a murderer to hide if he needed time to make a new plan. On the other hand, if one were trying to determine if one of the residents was a criminal, especially after living there for a few years, they townspeople typically didn't ask questions. That's the way they were. Yet the very privacy afforded to the residents is what could bring harm to Sophie and the Mennonite pastor who has been helping her.

I really enjoyed the people, especially Sophie, her landlady Esther, and Jonathon, the preacher. Among everyone, these are the characters who are fully three-dimensional, people that one might want to count as friends. Others are as well-developed as their roles required. This author has a wonderful way of showing the folks in her books with lively personalities. At least one of the protagonists is typically someone with a 'past', with hurts that have changed them and resulted in them turning far away from the Lord. Watching them begin to take risks is part of what I enjoy, as well as sometimes re-learning the same lessons. Seeing Sophie find so much more than she planned reminds me that the Lord can do so much more than we can ask or imagine!

The plot is intriguing and captivating from the first page. Sophie is a protagonist who is very likable, who has dared to have hopes and dreams and work towards them. Finding the bad guy proves to be risky and harder than anticipated. Sophie has received several anonymous warnings, and she in danger if she doesn't pack up and return to St. Louis. Someone knows who she is or at least what she is there for. The deceptions in small towns and prisons runs high. There are plot twists that increase the intrigue, bringing a completely

unexpected resolution. I highly recommend this novel to anyone who has enjoyed the author's previous novels, appreciate 'clean' suspense novels, or learning a little about Mennonites from one of Christian fiction's popular authors who is most knowledgeable in its faith.

With a grateful heart, I received a copy of this book from The Book Club Network in exchange for an honest review. All opinions are my own, and no monetary compensation was received for this review.

Cheryl Baranski says

Suspense at it's finest! Rising Darkness by: Nancy Mehl

Rising Darkness is book number three in the Finding Sanctuary series. Nancy Mehl has done it yet again! She has written a book that is so captivating that you won't want to put the book down. I was riveted to my seat right from the start. There are so many twists, turns and unexpected happenings that will capture your attention and not let go. I felt as though I was part of the story it is that intense. I could picture the story unfolding before my eyes! Be sure to grab your glass of sweet tea and kick back and enjoy this most wonderful book. This is one suspense book that you won't want to miss. So be sure to get your copy today. 5 stars!

Ali Wolpern says

Book #1 and #2 were better than this book. The book didn't get really good until the last 50 pages. First books in the series are best, but this one is still worth the read!

Vera Godley says

Nancy Mehl is a prolific writer. I have read and reviewed her last two three-book series – the Kingdom series and the Sanctuary series. While each novel is a stand alone book, it is more enjoyable to read them in the order in which they were written.

Kingdom and Sanctuary are two Mennonite communities that are a mixture of those of the Mennonite faith and those of other Christian denominations.

The author fleshes out the characters with descriptions, settings, and conversations that help the reader know just what a character's role in the story really is.

In Rising Darkness we have the conclusion of the Sanctuary three-book series. Having read the Kingdom series, I soon realized that the female protagonist, Sophia, is an abused child/teen from a Mennonite home in Kingdom; and the male protagonist, Jonathan, is a former Kingdom Mennonite who has become a pastor in a church of a different denomination in the town of Sanctuary.

Sanctuary is a close knit community but one in which folks work well together even though they don't share the same beliefs.

Sophia has come to Sanctuary in search of a story about a criminal and the stolen cash. This should be the making of her reporting career. She goes in as “Emily” to keep it “under cover.” During her search for the missing criminal who she believes may be in Sanctuary, she lies to the dear people in Sanctuary who befriend and aid her. Troubled by this deception, she still persists in her search. Then real trouble and threats begin.

Mehl writes a good suspense story that is clean, entertaining, and with characters you’d love to have as neighbors and perhaps some you wouldn’t want to meet in a dark alley. Another good conclusion to a good series.

DISCLOSURE: I received a complimentary copy to facilitate this review. Opinions are my own and I was not compensated for this review.

Claudia {SparrowHawk} says

Rising Darkness is one of those rare stories that served more as an eye opener than mere entertainment. The plot was surprisingly solid; the character development was great; more than anything, though, I found the protagonist’s story arc to be incredibly unique in comparison to other Christian novels and I was deeply encouraged and moved by it ? I really liked this story!

WHAT I LIKED

+ The overall story line and approach is thought-provoking and heartfelt. This is a story that deals with dark themes and delves into complex issues in a surprisingly mundane way for a detective story. Even more, this is the type of story that leads the reader to consider their own personal struggles, misunderstandings, and doubts.

+ I was wholly enthralled in the various sides to the story and greatly enjoyed how they all resolve brilliantly in the end ? there were characters from the previous books in the series that were interlaced with *Rising Darkness’* story line; there were no open endings or partial conclusions; more appealing to me, though, was Sophie’s internal conflict with God. Even now, I remember as I read this book in complete awe processing all of Sophie’s qualms and it wasn’t so much that I was dismayed or offended by Sophie’s increasing trepidations, rather I was comforted and relieved to know that – though fictional – the author wrote Sophie’s character arc with these hard questions and sentiments in mind:

? “If I don’t believe in You ? if I don’t hope You love me or that You want to help me ? I’ll never be disappointed again. I can make my own way. I don’t need You. I don’t need anyone.”

? “No. I told you, I don’t believe in God. I’ve rejected the idea of a God who allows children to be abused and abandoned. God never showed me any love. I prayed and prayed for help. None came. Now I trust myself. No one else.”

? “I’m not judging God by them. I’m judging God by God. I prayed and prayed for help. All I got back was silence. Explain that to me.”

And just as I found myself emotionally immersed in Sophie’s quandary and siding with her ultimate

perspective on life Nancy Mehl shrewdly stepped in and kindly reminded my incorrigible heart that:

? “Whether our pain is caused by something we did, or something that was done to us, looking backward can keep us from moving forward.”

? “People need the gifts that have been hidden inside you. You’re important to the church. To the world. And to the people who love you. God has called you to touch lives. And you can’t fulfill that calling if you’re imprisoned in the past.”

? “You’ll never be whole until you can picture yourself through the eyes of your heavenly Father instead of through the eyes of imperfect people.”

I cannot even begin to express how much I truly appreciate Nancy Mehl’s courage to venture down these dark alleys. As much as it pains me to confess this, I admit that I have wrestled with these ebb of emotions in more ways than I can count ? it was just incredibly refreshing to read a book like this one to say the least; especially in the Christian genre where almost every protagonist is found perfect and flawless.

+ Nancy Mehl gave life to her characters! Each one is richly detailed and they meshed well together, even the antagonist. I should mention that this is a character-driven storyline thus most of the plot progressed in light of the character(s)’ motives and resolve.

THINGS THAT MADE ME GO HMMM...

- I both liked and disliked Sophie. On the one hand, she was perfectly flawed, complex and deeply emotional ? traits I fully engrossed in when it comes to fictional characters. On the other hand, she was overwhelmingly pessimist; granted, she carried herself as a realist, but at the same time this innate trait seemed overbearing and it consequently took some time for her character to grow on me. It wasn’t until Nancy Mehl began to peel back her layers that I came to fully acknowledge and appreciate her vantage point and who she was as a person. Be that as it may, she is truly a memorable character and one that will remain close to me; perhaps because I find a lot of her pessimistic views in myself?

- There isn’t much brilliant logic in the super-detective scheme of things. Most of the detective work is simply gathering information. Too, while the mysterious intrigue was not as gripping as I had hoped, the character driven side to the story more than compensated these minor setbacks.

AFTERTHOUGHTS:

Ultimately, I really enjoyed *Rising Darkness* though it may not have been the best mystery-thriller I’ve read. Also, despite the weighted topics at hand, *Rising Darkness* will make you appreciate the people God has intentionally placed in your life ? my favorite book in the series by far!

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Maureen Timerman says

Nancy Mehl has gifted us with another visit to Sanctuary Missouri, and a stay with Esther our beloved Mennonite friend.

This one will keep you page turning and on the edge of your seat, you won't know where the danger is coming from, or who is the guilty party. There are a lot of surprises here, and things that appear one way, are soon looking like something else.

We reunite with several friends from previous visits to Sanctuary, and because we feel rather safe here, sometimes we become too complacent and don't see some of the danger lurking.

Some people have changed their looks, including the main character, Emily, or Sophie, she is not that abused child that grew up Mennonite, and now feels God should have protected her.

Will she get the answers she seeks here, or will evil win and get away with the crimes they have committed? Come along for a good heart stopping read, which will keep you reading, until you have answers.

I received this book through Bethany House Review Tour, and was not required to give a positive review.

Joan says

I am not a huge fan of Amish or Mennonite novels but I really do like the Finding Sanctuary series by Nancy Mehl. Sanctuary, Missouri is a town where conservative and progressive Mennonites, as well as those not Mennonite at all, live together. And another feature, not all of the Mennonites are perfect. That makes for a style of fiction I really enjoy.

Our main character in this novel is Sophie Wittenbauer. She was raised in a strict Mennonite home in Kingdom but left as soon as she was eighteen. She had been terribly mistreated by her father and made some poor choices herself. She's now a new reporter at a newspaper. Wanting to move beyond her entry level reporting jobs, she aspires to that one story that will make her career.

When she overhears office chatter about a possible lead in a decades old robbery and murder, she decides this is her big chance. She knows the convict who sent the letter to the newspaper. He had overheard one of the murderers mention Sanctuary as a place to hide out. Sophie takes some time off, creates a likely reason for her visit, takes on a new name, and heads to the small Missouri town.

Imagine her surprise when one of the first people she meets is Jonathon, the young man she loved as a troubled teenager back in Kingdom. He's now the pastor of an evangelical church in Sanctuary. He doesn't recognize her at first although he is puzzled by his inner feelings toward her. She still loves him but knows he could never still love her – not after all that had happened.

I love this town of Sanctuary. It's a place where the Mennonite and evangelical churches get together for dinners, where the pastors are good fishing buddies, and where people look out for each other. It is also the place where a murderer can hide out with some anonymity. Before too long, Sophie's probing investigation stirs up trouble. Will she be able to identify the murderer before it's too late? Will Jonathon stay by her side and help her?

We meet some great (and not so great) characters in Sanctuary. There are no hotels in Sanctuary so Sophia stays with Esther, an elderly woman and my favorite. What a dear – and she is much smarter than Sophie anticipates. We get reacquainted with others of the town we've met in previous novels in the series too.

One of the themes running through this novel is getting beyond a troubled religious past. It is hard for Sophie to go to Sanctuary. She has to keep reminding herself it is not Kingdom, with its bad memories. There is much she must overcome, including a dismissal of God as caring for her. I really like it that Mehl has made

Sophie's conservative Christian background very realistic. Readers with a less than ideal childhood in a conservative Christian setting will certainly identify with Sophie.

Another issue in the book is Sophie's drive to be a successful crime reporter. Surrounded by wonderful people, and a potential beau, Sophie has to rethink her priorities. I kept hoping she'd make the right choice.

I highly recommend this novel. There is good suspense, a wonderful community through which the story flows, great characters, and some lessons to learn about living. This is the third book in a series but reads very well on its own.

I received a complimentary galley of this book from the publisher for the purpose of an independent and honest review.

Diana says

Once again, author Nancy Mehl has crafted a suspenseful page-turner set against the peaceful backdrop of the quaint, small town of Sanctuary—a predominantly Mennonite community with only two churches, two charming cafes, cozy picturesque houses, and is as safe as its name suggests—or is it?

Sophie Wittenbauer dreads going to Sanctuary as memories of an abusive, shameful past in her strict Mennonite hometown of Kingdom still haunt her. However, when she learns a suspect from a crime committed years earlier may be hiding in Sanctuary, she sees it as an opportunity to further her career at the newspaper. Although Sophie assumes a false identity so that she can investigate, she begins to receive threatening notes and fears her cover has somehow been blown. Then to her shock she runs into the very person she has loved her whole life—a man she could never be good enough for because of her degrading past. What is he doing in Sanctuary and who wants to stop her...perhaps permanently? As darkness envelopes Sophie and seeks to destroy her, will she begin to put her trust in the God she feels has forsaken her since childhood? Will she ever learn to love herself as God loves her and open herself up to romance?

Nancy Mehl's *Rising Darkness* is one of her best novels to date in my opinion! I pride myself in figuring out whodunits, but although I racked my brain I still had no clue who the bad guy was! The author compassionately and discreetly dealt with the subject of adult victims of child abuse and low self-esteem issues resulting from it. Sophie was so dear to my heart that I just wanted to hug her seemingly tough little independent self and tell her I went through the same battle and there is light at the end of the tunnel! God will turn our mourning into dancing and clothe us with gladness if we'll let Him! With just the right peppering of romance, realistic multifaceted characters, and a wonderful message of redemption—all interwoven with an intricate and suspenseful, heart-racing plot—what more could you ask for in a book? Not a thing!...so be sure to order your copy today!
