



Providence

Lisa Colozza Cocca

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The eldest of ten children on a dirt-poor farm, Becky trudges through life as a full-time babysitter, trying to avoid her father's periodic violent rages. When the family's barn burns down, her father lays the blame on Becky, and her own mother tells her to run for it. Run she does, hopping into an empty freight car. There, in a duffel bag, Becky finds an abandoned baby girl, only hours old. After years of tending to her siblings, sixteen-year-old Becky knows just what a baby needs. This baby needs a mother. With no mother around, Becky decides, at least temporarily, this baby needs her. When Becky hops off the train in a small Georgia town, it's with baby "Georgia" in her arms. When she meets Rosie, an eccentric thrift-shop owner, who comes to value and love Becky as no one ever has, Becky rashly claims the baby as her own. Not everyone in town is as welcoming as Rosie, though. Many suspect Becky and her baby are not what they seem. Among the doubters is a beautiful, reclusive woman with her own terrible loss and a long history with Rosie. As Becky's life becomes entangled with the lives of the people in town, including a handsome boy who suspects Becky is hiding something from her past, she finds her secrets more difficult to keep. Becky should grab the baby and run, but her newfound home and job with Rosie have given Becky the family she's never known. Despite her guilt over leaving her mother alone, she is happy for the first time. But it's a happiness not meant to last. When the truth comes out, Becky has the biggest decision of her life to make. Should she run away again? Should she stay--and fight? Or lie? What does the future hold for Becky and Georgia? With a greatness of heart and a stubborn insistence on hope found in few novels of any genre, *Providence* proves that home is where you find it, love is an active verb, and family is more than just a word.

"When 16-year-old Becky Miller rescues an abandoned newborn, a nontraditional family is born, attracting other warm-hearted women into its folds. Reading *Providence* is like cozying up with longtime friends in front of a homey fire." --**Sherry Shahan**, author of *Skin and Bones* (Albert Whitman & Co.)

"A beautifully written tale about trying to make the right choice when there might not be one." --**Wendy Mass**, author of *A Mango-Shaped Space* (Little Brown Books for Young Readers)

Providence Details

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Genre : Young Adult, Contemporary, Fiction, Coming Of Age, Realistic Fiction

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From Reader Review Providence for online ebook

Rosie says

*I was provided with a copy of Providence by F+W/Adams Media in exchange for an honest review.

Providence isn't the kind of book I usually read but the cover art caught my attention and the description drew me in and I found myself having to know what happened.

We follow the story of a teenage girl called Becky, who leaves home and discovers a baby in a train carriage. They arrive in a small town in Georgia, are taken in by a kind shopkeeper and Becky tries to do what's best for the baby, whose parents don't seem to be coming forward to claim her.

I found Providence to be a really easy to pick up and heartwarming read. The relationship between Becky and Rosie was probably my favourite part as it really brought the story to life.

Both Rosie and Becky were all round good people and the way Rosie treated two strangers was refreshing. Admittedly I found her overwhelming kindness and trust a little convenient for Becky, but I told the cynic in me to shut up and remember that there really are people like Rosie in the world.

The ending relating to the baby seemed a little obvious perhaps half way through the story and it didn't really sit with me well when it happened, but let me explain why I'm not annoyed by that.

The result wasn't the one I wanted but as the book explained it was for the best and I take my uneasiness about the ending as a sign that the author really made me feel for Becky, because that's how she felt about the solution. Though she might not have liked it, in the end it was the best decision should could make and showed how much she cared.

I had one niggle with Providence; whenever I read about the high street I pictured it being set in the 50s. I'm not sure if that's because I haven't experienced a small American town myself or been into a shop like the Second Hand Rose, but I struggled to picture it in the present day.

That aside I really enjoyed Providence and it showed me that I should occasionally leave the cosy arms of the dystopian genre.

If you're looking for a well written, easy to pick up read about friendship, trust and doing the right thing, then you should give Providence a go.

Jenny - Book Sojourner says

3-1/2 to 4 Stars

Reading Providence was like taking a stroll down a country road. Enjoying the beauty all around. Not knowing what is around the corner, but looking forward to the surprise and the adventure. I felt like I was walking amongst friends, neither in a rush to get ahead nor wanting to stay behind, but simply wanting to enjoy every moment I could with them on our journey. Walking in Becky's shoes felt just like that.

Becky is a sweet, country girl, in incredibly sad circumstances, who not only is without a home, but has stumbled upon an abandoned baby, bonding the two of them instantly. To most this would be a daunting predicament, but to Becky, she simply forges ahead. No matter what happens, Becky is a fighter, determined to make the most of anything that comes her way, not wanting to be a burden on anyone. Her journey, discovering not only new friends, but finding the strength of who she is, and the value of her worth.

Becky also meets some wonderful people, creating her own family along the way. Rosie is a true gem, and won my heart. John is subtle but sweet, and I only wish there was more of him. There are others who will test your perceptions of them, but they all serve a purpose. And the story grows and blooms and culminates into a touching, heartfelt ending, shining with a beautiful message. It's also a nice, clean YA story, which was refreshing.

More dialogue, particularly on Becky's part, would have made this story even better for me. We get a lot of Becky's thoughts, but don't quite get enough of her verbal interactions with people, and for me that limited her personality. It needed stronger showing, less telling. This stilted some of the character interactions, and hindered the minor romance. A bit more to the ending, perhaps an epilogue, would have also been great.

But overall, I enjoyed this sweet story, and its change of pace. And it's refreshing to read a YA book I'm comfortable recommending to my friend's daughter.

Bubble Bath Books says

Bubby says:

I loved this book. Loved it. Everything about it is just right. It's nice and clean, it's beautifully written and it has the best characters I've read about in a long time. I agonized with Becky over her choices and her horrible family. I rejoiced with her when Rosie took her in and made her a new family. I blushed with her when it became obvious that John had feelings for her. There are not enough good things I can say about Providence.

Sissy says: Protagonist Becky came from such a hard situation and jumped right into what could have been a minefield of disaster. The author could have gone all dark and literati and made a tragedy at every turn. In fact I was anxious about what could happen but Cocca makes the story very happy and readable for the anxiety-stricken reader and leaves just enough bumps in the road to make it real. The real message of Providence is hope. With the right mix of people and in the right circumstances, hope blossoms. I think that's why I loved this so much. The story is unique. The characters are believable. And the takeaway is happiness and hope. 5 bubbles. Read full review at www.bubblebathbooks.net

Melinda says

This is one of these books that you just settle down into and it is a great young adult option for fans of Southern Literature. A lot of the typical elements of that genre can be found there--the small town community, someone dealing with hardships in their life, and people taking care of each other (and, oh yeah, it is set in the South...).

Becky is an interesting character. She was never allowed to be a child--she says from a young age, she was in charge of taking care of her 9 (and counting) younger siblings. She did attend school, but that was actually an inconvenience to her parents, who would rather have had her working on her farm.

When Becky runs away and finds an abandoned newborn, she immediately takes on the roll of mother to the child. As she slowly becomes more a part of the life of her new town, she is presented again and again with the opportunity to "act her age," but is more comfortable living beyond her years. In some ways, this is more of a reverse coming of age story, it is about a young woman who learns to be young.

I will say that reading this as an adult is probably a different experience than reading it as a "young adult." Throughout much of this book, I found myself worrying about the such details of the legality of caring for an abandoned child, of Becky working "under the table" for Rosie and others in the town, etc. I think these things probably would not be on the radar of a teenaged reader and, therefore, they would not be bothered by them.

All in all, this was a satisfying, bittersweet, and heart-warming read for anyone--young adult or otherwise--who is looking for their next book.

I received an electronic copy of this book in exchange for an honest review. I received no other compensation for this post.

Cheryl says

Becky just wanted a few moments to herself to read and hide from her father. She did not mean to burn down the family barn. Becky packs her bags and leaves. She hops a train and finds a baby girl left in a duffel bag. Becky knows how to care for a baby thanks to her siblings. The train stops at Watson's Grove, Georgia. Becky figures this is a good place to stop until it is safe to go back home.

Providence is a instant winner! One of the best books of 2014. I would group author, Lisa up there with Jodi Thomas and Robyn Carr. Two of my many authors. Lisa brought she life to the characters in this book. They felt more like family then they did people in a story.

Rosie is an angel. I almost cried during a certain part. I don't want to give it away. I absolutely loved Baby Girl aka Georgia. She stole my heart. Then there is Becky, John, and the rest of the people in Watson's Grove. The only bad part about this book is when I finished the last word and was finished with the book. I did not want it to end. I tried to savor every moment of this book.

Wereadya says

Check out this review and more at our blog: <http://wereadya.blogspot.com/>

Release Date: March 2014

Genre: Realistic Fiction

When and Where: Small town Georgia in modern times

Protagonist: Becky, age 16

The Story: Hoping to avoid her abusive father until he becomes less enraged, Becky runs away at the advice of her mother and seeks shelter in an empty train car. Becky is stunned to find a tiny baby, perhaps only hours old. Relying on the experience of having cared for several younger siblings, Becky claims the tiny baby as her own and begins an unexpected journey towards a life she could never have expected. In tiny Watson's Grove, Becky becomes both friend and family to Rosie, owner of the Second Hand Rose consignment store. Struggling to provide the best of care to baby Georgia and to take care of herself, Becky hides Georgia's story of abandonment and lives as a teen parent. Despite the town's initially close-minded response to Becky, the townspeople gradually open their hearts to both young mother and child, and soon Becky learns the value of putting trust and faith in humanity.

Reaction: Sweetly and beautifully written, Providence is crafted in the manner of small towns and the people who live in them. The pacing of the tale moves in a similar manner, at times moving quickly, while at other times rambling slowly about, taking the reader on an unexpected journey of a character's growth over a period of time. Author Lisa Colozza Cocca weaves a plot that reflects the goodness of humanity, and she successfully keeps the reader uncertain of Becky and Georgia's fate up to the final pages; Providence is truly a unique read.

If You Liked... Where the Heart Is, Taking Care of Max, and books that study and reveal human frailties and reality, then Providence is for you.

Rating: 4

Teacher Notes: Providence is for thoughtful readers who enjoy stories involving character development. This would also be an excellent book to use for teaching internal dialogue.

Andrea says

Thank you Netgalley for allowing me read and review this early!

I think this is a beautiful book with an interesting and unique topic. It's all about a girl growing up earlier than she should have to and learning responsibility. That being said, the ending really doesn't sit well with me.

First off, I love Becky. She is just a 16 year old kid who finds a baby and wants to do right by her. Sure, it's not the legal way but that doesn't make it any less right in my mind. Readers get to see how she grows and develops into this lovely young woman with a baby who she adopted in her own mind. I also liked Rosie. an 88-year-old woman who knows when someone needs help and is willing to grant everyone a chance. The dynamic between these two is wonderful and gives the story the depth it needs.

However, I really disliked the ending to this. I get why it had to be that way, but I still don't think it was right for Lily to adopt Georgia. I think, with a proper investigation and Lily's offer to adopt Becky, Becky should have been able to adopt Georgia, allowing her to grow up in that home. For some reason, it felt like from the beginning Lily was going to adopt the baby and it made me dislike her, like a lot. We grow with Becky as

she raises this baby as her own but in the end she is not allowed to be the mother, no matter how much she did for Georgia. It just left a poor taste in my mouth.

Also, I felt like the time was a bit wonky, one minute it would be one day and then all of a sudden a week would pass. I think it could have been done in a better, coherent manner. In addition, the transitions in the middle of chapters could be improved to help the flow.

Overall, I give this 3/5 stars because I love the growth and depth of Becky, she really made the novel. I just wish the ending reflected more of the story as a whole.

Sandy says

4.5 stars

Fleeing her father after an incident with the barn, Becky hops a freight train out of town hoping to start a new life. It is what is inside this freight car that will change the course of Becky's life forever. Inside one of the railcars, placed in a duffle bag tucked in the corner, is an abandoned baby. This responsibility was not on 16 year-old Becky's list of travels when she jumped onboard but she realizes she cannot leave this newborn baby. Becky decides to care for this baby until she can find its mother. As the train stops in Watson's Grove, Becky needs to find the necessities for the child. As she walks into the thrift shop owned by Rose, it was like destiny. Rose and Becky hit it off and before Becky walked out the door, she has a job at the thrift shop and most of what she needed for the time being. The people of Watson Grove are typical of most small towns, some spread gossip about the new mother and child and some were excited to see the new faces in town. Becky has to be creative about her past and the baby's short history as the town folk want answers about their lives while Becky continues to search for answers herself. As Becky settles in, she also thinks about her parents and her siblings on the farm. Her mind is never far from the ranch and wondering if they are also thinking about her. It is small town living with drama, love and secrets. This story will touch your heart.

I fell in love with this book from the first couple pages. As Becky walked off the farm and started on her adventure, I knew the couch was going to be my home for a while. Becky was confused about her role at home before she left. When she finally set off and hit the tracks, she was going to do what she wanted to do....finally but that all changed when she came upon the bag. She never contemplated what to do, I liked that. That said a lot about the character of Becky. She did try a few times to locate the mother but she didn't question her decision. That theme carried all the way through the book. Watson Grove reminded me of the small town my grandparents lived in. How they would decorate for the holidays, the chatter, the hospitality, the gossip – reading the book took me back to when I was a child and would visit there. The author did an excellent job describing the characters and the setting- oh, the memories. The ending, it was perhaps the best ending possible but for Becky.....I would have been more reluctant and wanted a lawyer. It just was wrapped up a bit too tight for me.

Thank you Net Galley for providing me a free copy to review. This is my own opinion of the book.

Hannah Harvey says

There is so much good stuff in this novel. Top of the list would have to be the fantastic main character and

narrator Becky. I found her voice in this book to be really strong, unique and able to pull me into her world and her story. It felt real to me and that's something that I love in books.

I really liked the way she told her story, and led us through her life after finding the baby and taking on the role of a mother.

This book was seeped with emotion and great characters who all wove into the story so well. I loved the atmosphere of this book. I could picture the inside of the Second Hand Rose, and as I was reading it I could hear the characters all taking on different voices in my head, because they were all really individual.

It's truly a great story, however it did, for me at least, have it's downsides as well. Only a few minor points that didn't stop me really enjoying this novel, but worth noting.

In some places I felt that the pacing was a little off, and by this I mean that sometimes I found it a little bit slow and it lost my interest. Not often, but on a couple of occasions this happened.

Secondly, and this is where the book lost a few points for me, was that the ending fell a little flat. I felt as if there were some things that weren't resolved fully, and some things I would have liked to of been expanded on.

Lastly I would have liked to of seen a little more balance between the drama with Becky and the baby, and the lighter romance aspect. When I read the synopsis for this book, specifically the part about her meeting a boy who suspected she was hiding something in her past, I did think that he'd play a bigger role, but as it was, I would have liked more.

Those are the only negative points though, and like I said, I did really enjoy this novel and I'm really pleased I got the chance to read it.

Jaki says

This review and others also posted at Tangled Bookmarks

*I received this book for free from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review. This does not affect my opinion of the book or the content of my review.

A wonderful story idea that just didn't get there for me. The story is there, but ultimately, the execution of it let it down.

A cast of cardboard characters, with only the main protagonist Becky, and the elderly Rosie coming close to being fully fleshed out. The romantic interest John, is so one-dimensional, that he could have been left out of the story completely and never been missed. I wasn't even really sure what his role was, other than to show how responsible Becky is becoming by deciding that as attracted to him as she was, she must put Baby Girl and her other responsibilities first.

A lot of "telling" and not enough "showing". A lot of paragraphs where the first word of each sentence was "I". *I changed Baby Girl's diaper. I fed her. I put her down in the crib. I rubbed her back till she fell asleep. I made lunch for us. I had a shower.* Constantly. Apparently Becky's father was rather abusive, only we're not really shown any of that – other than a fairly shocking scene involving a kitten – we're only told. The majority of backstory we receive about Becky's family is by her either thinking about what they would have done in a certain situation, or little throwaway lines about how her father would never have bought the school photographs so she always felt rather hard done by when her other classmates were swapping their photos. The oldest of ten children, we never even find out about any of her siblings. One or two are mentioned briefly, but that's about it. As a teenager who has up and left her entire family, I kept waiting for

Becky to talk about at least one sibling she was perhaps close to, but nothing.

As a young girl arriving in a small town with a baby, she receives her fair share of dirty looks and attitude at being a “teenage mother”. I think. Actually, only one person in the entire book really glares at her – the waitress in the local diner. And the mother of a possible friend assumes Becky is babysitting. Ah, that’s about it really. The “possible” friendship with a young girl she meets in the library – Sarah – goes absolutely nowhere. You get the sense Becky and Sarah would end up being BFF’s, but there is so little interaction between them, that you start to wonder why Sarah is even there.

Ultimately, what could have been a lovely coming of age tale of a young girl who starts to receive the only love and friendship she has really known, and discovers herself in caring for a young baby, dissolves into a tale of cardboard cut-out characters, and mediocre writing. I could see the potential for Providence being a sweet, tender tale of facing up to responsibilities and first love...but it just didn’t make it.

Nicole (Reading Books With Coffee) says

When I first started to read Providence, I wasn't sure about it- initially, it seemed like something I wouldn't like. But as I kept reading,I started to get drawn into Becky's world.

I felt for Becky, who had to grow up fast. And finding a newborn on a train, and taking her in, and finding a place that becomes her home...Becky had to grow up even more. I'm glad Georgia had people who cared for her, and I'm glad Becky found the same. Something that didn't set well with me was how Becky's parents didn't seem to care that she was gone and that we don't see them fighting to get Becky back. Still, it fit with why she left and never went back. There is a part of me that wanted to see more of Becky's life with her parents and life at home because I wanted more to see how much her new life contrasted with her old one.

I loved Rosie and how kind she was. She really did give Becky and Georgia a home and they felt very much like a family. I'm not sure how I feel about Lily, especially with how the book ended. On the one hand, I'm glad Becky and Georgia did find someone who cared about them and would take them in...but at the same time, I loved how Becky did what she needed to do in order to take care of Georgia. Becky really did change a lot over the course of the book, and she has a really bright future ahead of her. Still, it did seem like it was the best decision for everyone.

I will say that I kept picturing the book taking place in the 1950's. There's something very old-timey about the town, and it was hard to imagine it taking place in present time. Then again, I've never lived in a small town like the one Becky came across, so for all I know, small towns have that good-ole-day kind of feel.

Let's Rate It: I have a few issues with Providence, but overall, I really liked it! I liked seeing Becky deal with and overcome some of the things she had happen. And I like how welcoming people were to Becky. Providence gets 4 stars.

Vanya D. says

NOTE: I received the eARC via Netgalley in exchange for my honest review.

I wasn't sure I'd be impressed by this novel when I picked it up. The premise sounded good enough, but I had no idea how good the book would actually turn out. It actually had literary merit and made me think of *The Help*. So, I really liked it.

Writing style:

It was clean, and had the feeling that only a Southern writer can entwine with the words. Written from Becky's POV in the first person style, it made me see every decision she made through her own eyes.

Story line:

Providence was a story completely devoid of the usual cliches that fill young adult fiction books. By no means was it a romance story, although there was the beginning of one such sweet relationship-in-the-making.

Trouble always found Becky, or so we were told. So when an accident left her family's barn in flames, she decided to make a run for it and give her violent father some time to cool off. Little did she know that that would be just the beginning of an adventure she never thought she would go on.

Themes:

- The Good Samaritan is almost never met with respect.
- Can a girl survive alone in a world that is too prejudiced to help and too black hearted to give a hand?
- How do you ever figure out what's right and what's wrong?

Characters:

Becky was a brave girl. Left with nothing but her meager savings and a small backpack with her belongings, she should've been gone from home for no more than a couple of days. Finding Baby Girl all alone and abandoned in a dirty train car changed those plans. I certainly can't say that I agreed with Becky's choice to take Baby Girl with her instead of taking her to the police. After all, she could not have known for sure that she'd be able to take care of the little one. They could have starved to death or worse.

Still though, I understand that she was afraid that the police would take her back to her father. And she was also afraid that Baby Girl wouldn't fall in good hands. So there she was, (I believe) sixteen years old, with a baby to take care of. I'm not sure how many girls out there would be able to manage. Especially with a child who is not their own.

Rosie was the only person who decided to trust the lonely new girl, even though there was also a baby in the picture. Had it not been for the cheerful old lady, I'm not sure if Becky and little Georgia Rose would have had a chance.

John was the boy-for-everything in this small town. Rosie used him for her garden, for handy work and for whatever else she couldn't do herself. He turned out to be a thoughtful, understanding young man with a kind heart. He was also exceptional, but I guess that's because he wasn't the immature kind of boy we usually see in young adult literature. John knew that Becky had quite a lot on her head and he didn't press her for attention even though he made his interests known. I could do nothing but respect him.

In conclusion:

Providence is a book you'd end up loving if you care for novels with good literary merit. It's not just the next cliché romance story. It's a lot more.

Dianne says

Stepping into sixteen year old Becky's mind and heart is a journey well worth taking! Providence by Lisa Colozza Cocca is a moving tale of a very poor young girl who has spent her entire life under the thumb of an often cruel father, being a surrogate mother to her nine younger siblings. The final straw finally sends Becky running from the suffocation of the only life she has known. Without a plan, she hops aboard a freight train, discovering a small bag that will change her life forever. A newborn infant is bundled into a small duffle, left alone in the world. Without hesitation, Becky takes the baby girl and after a brief search to find her parents, and not knowing what to do, she keeps her. As she wanders, foraging for food for the baby, sleeping anywhere she can find, she comes across Rosie, an eccentric second hand shop owner who knows Becky is hiding something, but slowly enfold both her and the baby into her life and home. Becky is fiercely protective of the baby and finds an outlet for the love she both longs to give and to receive. Becky's talents and simple grace, along with her need to see life as beautiful finds this small town opening up to her in a heart-warming way, proving to her that home isn't necessarily where you were born, but where your heart is filled with love.

Lisa Colozza Cocca has used Becky's voice and thoughts to tell her story, from the eyes of a teen, who has never had much and is determined to make it in the world. Brilliantly detailing the real responsibilities of caring for an infant, from the constant changing, to the every two hours of feeding, the expenses and exhaustive hours spent being there for a child; Ms. Cocca has laid bare the daily reality of being a parent, and Becky is far beyond her years in patience and the capacity for selflessness. I enjoyed the way she dug in and made it real, not a dreamy, fluffy version of life as a parent. Anyone who would find this boring or repetitive definitely is NOT up for task!

Ms. Cocca writes with a soft hand, gently unfolding this heart-warming and sometimes heart-breaking journey she leads Becky on. This is a story of hope and growth, and futures never dreamed of coming true, a story of the unselfishness of real love. Wonderful writing, magnetic!

I received an ARC edition from Merit Press in exchange for my honest review.

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Available from: Amazon | Barnes & Noble

Rebecca (BookBacon) says

I received this book as an arc in exchange for a fair and honest review.

Read this review and others @ <http://www.bookbacon.com>

Providence is a good story shrouded in monotony. I really wanted to like this book because it is very different than a book I would typically read.

Becky and Rosie were endearing. Georgia helped to give the story substance BUT (and that is one big but) I became tired of reading the every move of the characters.

Becky changes Georgia, cooks dinner, tucks in Rosie, goes to bed, doesn't sleep, wakes up, thinks about stuff, goes to the store, eats lunch, feeds Georgia, eats dinner, goes to bed and sleeps a little.... And on and on and on again.

I liked the idea of unconditional love and the desire for something better for Georgia.

I liked the small town relationships that people built in the story, with a willingness to help one another out whenever needed.

I even liked John, who was understanding and kind to Georgia, Rosie and Lily.

BUT

I didn't like the slooowwww progression of events.

I didn't like the explanation of everything written in place of the turbulence that could actually occur in this situation.

And finally, I didn't like that finally a climax seems to climb out from the pages within the last chapters and it ends so abruptly, with little trepidation that it hardly seems important at all.

Natalie says

**** RECEIVED FROM NET GALLEY FOR HONEST REVIEW****

This was a new type of book for me but I really enjoyed it. This book is nothing but a beautiful story that didn't start out so beautiful.

Becky Miller is such an amazing young girl. She's dealing with her own problems and then happens upon a baby that someone abandoned. At sixteen, Becky decided instead of just dropping her off somewhere else, that she would find ways for her and this beautiful little girl to eat and make a home for her.

Rosie is a nice older woman that is nothing but a beautiful ray of sunlight for these girls. She gives Becky a job and helps her get her life figured out. She becomes the family that they all need.

I loved all the characters in this book and this book was truly refreshing. It is safe for ANY age and is a true eye opener things that can happen these days. Between the judging of people to babies being abandoned it's just sad. Thank you Lisa for this book it was truly a great read. Five stars have been granted :)

