



The Complete Darkness Collection

Leslie Lee Sanders

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Includes all three installments of the Refuge Inc. series.

Before the Darkness (Book 1)

After an asteroid strikes Earth, a series of violent earthquakes destroy secluded Phoenix and leave survivor Elliot struggling to stay focused in the bleak aftermath. He meets fellow survivor, Adam, and together they search for reliable shelter and other survivors while distant, murky clouds fast approach. Their hunt for shelter leads them down an alternate path when they find spray painted symbols directing them to a mysterious place: Refuge Inc.

Amid the Darkness (Book 2)

Weeks after an asteroid strikes Earth, hurling Elliot and Adam into a fight for their survival, the two take shelter in an underground compound known as Refuge Inc. Shaking their past seems impossible as it comes back to haunt them, weakening the foundation of their relationship. Elliot, hung up on guilt over his former actions, tries to right his wrongs which leads him face-to-face with the troubling secrets of the compound. Adam's run-in with the enigmatic prophet makes him question Refuge Inc. and the survivors' future.

Beyond the Darkness (Book 3)

Phoenix—a dark, vast ruin, speckled with sporadic rays of light pushing its way through the dark, dense clouds. Adam and Elliot wander the collapsed city for days before taking shelter at the nearly standing Arrowhead hospital. Their days are filled with hopes of rescue and a deep need for emotional and mental closeness, until a harsh reality take over their thoughts—their food and supplies are dwindling, and they are in desperate need of assistance and reprieve. They're forced to return to the hellish compound, also known as Refuge Inc.

WARNING: Contains explicit male-male sexual practices, graphic language, some violence and brief descriptions of the dead.

The Complete Darkness Collection Details

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Author : Leslie Lee Sanders

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From Reader Review The Complete Darkness Collection for online ebook

Jaz says

A free copy of this book was provided by the author in exchange for an honest review.

For some reason I've lately been drawn to post-apocalyptic stories. I've also introduced myself with authors previously unknown to me and though I typically shy away from everything I can't guarantee I'll like, I'm happy for these new acquaintances. Leslie Lee Sanders is no exception. Neither is her story *The Complete Darkness Collection* .

The story begins with a rather sad view of a world after an asteroid hit the planet. Our main characters meet unexpectedly, both convinced there are no other survivors. Elliott and Adam begin their journey towards something better and hopefully safer, all the while learning things about not only each other, but themselves as well. While they cross dangers and moments of terror, they meet other survivors and are at times forced to share strengths in order to get by. I felt that was the strongest message in these men's story; how to get by and move on when moving in seemed impossible.

Elliot's character immediately caught me. He's funny in a good way; kind of impulsive and easily provoked but at the same time he's cozy. He has a feisty temper with child-like hope and he probably doesn't care to filter much of what comes out of his mouth. His words and actions seemed very thoughtless at times but I felt he never really wanted to hurt anyone or cause pain. It was he who was needy and a little on the soft side, but at the same time I felt he carried much of Adam's burdens throughout the story as well.

In the beginning of the story Adam seemed very distant and absent. He seemed to have everything figured out; the way he comforted Elliot, the way he handled himself and the situation they were in. But slowly his skillfully played front started to fall and what was underneath wasn't so pretty. Both he and Elliot had had troubles in the past, relationships and bad experiences, but I felt it was Adam who really had to struggle to get where he eventually was at the end of the story.

Usually one of the MCs win me over more than the other but with this book it's impossible for me to say which I like better. They are different, yet so same, and their relationship is so perfectly flawed it felt real even if the surroundings and everything happening around them didn't feel quite as realistic. There was a lot of misunderstanding between them, a lot of things they probably could've avoided if only they'd thought to communicate with each other. Side-characters added a little twist into their story, at times making things even more complicated and difficult. I liked how everything wasn't resolved just like that, that they had to go through all of those nasty ugly bits to get to the end. Over all, I really liked this book. I liked how the world was built up as ruins around them and how they fought to survive. The book wasn't all about their love story but the aftermath of the asteroid as well, and I really liked how the author blended the plot with the romance.

Issa says

3.25 stars. When I picked up this story I expected a dystopian story somewhat in the middle of a new world, not at the beginning. That's not a complaint, just a shift in expectations that I had mistakenly picked up.

We start with Elliot alive after an asteroid has hit the west coast causing destruction and a series of massive earthquakes that level the city of Phoenix. He thinks he might be the only one left until he meets Adam, a fellow survivor. Happy to meet another human they band together to survive.

This story is told in three distinct sections and the first section is by far the weakest. It's in part to the necessary world building but too many holes exist. Where is everyone? That's a question that I kept asking through the whole thing. It's not clear if everyone left, they only had a couple days warning of the impact, and if they died, why do Elliot and Adam find so few bodies? Elliot and Adam also make odd choices. When finding a fabulous water source, they only fill their bottles, they don't try and harvest water for later. Same with food, only collecting some acting as if food and water can be found in a ruined world later. They don't try to hunker down and get their bearings, even before they decide to go to Refuge, Inc, and Adam in particular wants to wander aimlessly.

Then you have Elliott who has an injury so bad they can smell the infection that seems to heal overnight. And finally the sex. Elliot, a gay man, has the foresight to grab condoms but no lube and dear heavens saliva is not lube. I cringed and had to skip some of that.

But, despite all the problems, the characters of Elliot and Adam are solid. Emotionally, they are right where I'd expect two people to be at the end of the world, changing on a dime from strong and determined to weak and whiny, engaging in as much sex as possible as an escape from the reality. As they struggle with their own personal demons and with each other, they find info on Refuge, Inc and decide to check it out.

Refuge Inc is the second section of the story. Inside, everything is taken from them and they are assigned board and jobs based on their former professions. In return for their belongings and labor they get food, necessities, and safety from the toxic cloud outside. When the section opens, they've been there for a month. They should have known more about what was what in that amount of time so I tossed that month timeline out of my brain and moved forward. Elliot is in food preparation and Adam's in security and they are separated into different areas only seeing each other occasionally and wondering if they should continue seeing each other. Things are clearly not right at Refuge Inc, and while searching for answers about what happened to a dog they'd brought with them, Adam and Elliott find out secrets about the facility and the "Prophet", things that turn everything upside down and make them believe the asteroid hit was not all the media portrayed. I was spellbound as Adam and Elliott's quest moved from incarceration, breaking and entering, self defense, and finally escape. The emotion and tension came through the page and my heart broke for Elliott and Adam again and again.

They barely escape and hence we move the third and final segment. Adam and Elliot try to live on the outside of Refuge Inc, their relationship back on track after a rocky period behind the Refuge wall. Once night they are almost mugged and instead form a truce with three new people. They decide to head back to Refuge Inc as it has food for the newcomers and a radio that Adam and Elliot hope to use to call for help.

The addition of the newcomers adds drama to the story as you just can't tell whether to trust them or not. But their presence brings Adam and Elliot closer and into a couple I loved. Going back isn't easy, the Refuge has been taken over by a madman, just about everyone is gone (there's that question again, where is everyone) and the atmosphere the author created around the abandoned facility is down right creepy. I loved it.

At the end more secrets are exposed, deeper and more disturbing than they had thought and help finally does come. But the end left more questions than answers, particularly the epilogue which is probably trying to set up for the next book but I felt lost and wish there had been a clearer explanation of what happened. As it is, I'm still not sure.

I have to say I liked the story. I struggled with the beginning but found Adam and Elliott to be real, likable characters I wouldn't mind seeing again.

I received a copy of this story free of charge from the author in exchange for an honest review.

Veronica of V's Reads says

I received a copy of this book via Goodreads's Don't Buy My Love program in exchange for an honest review. There are some spoilers.

This story centers on the few meager survivors of a catastrophic asteroid collision that occurs near the US west coast. This story is centered in Phoenix AZ. The main characters: Elliot and Adam are two twenty-ish men. Elliot is out and proud gay, Adam has just left a committed relationship with a woman, Jena, for whom he had no romantic inclination because he was closeted gay.

While stumbling through the barren and buckled remains of his neighborhood, Elliot happens upon Adam. They are overjoyed to find they are not alone. Earthquakes continue to rock the terrain and they seek shelter together. They also become intimate within hours of meeting--which felt contrived and unrealistic.

They struggle to find more survivors, mainly because Elliot becomes injured and they go to the virtually empty hospital to seek medicine--again totally unreasonable that there are no emergency response measures or staff. Or even patients. I mean, virtually no one had time to evacuate, because the world government alliance (perhaps) collectively hid the imminent collision of the asteroid from the public until days before it was due to occur. (I cannot stress the inconceivability of this happening what with our 24/7 global news culture.)

While scouring the remains of a grocery store, Adam and Elliot learn of Refuge Inc., a place for survivors to gather for supplies and shelter. Adam wants to find this place--somehow thinking he might find his ex-fiance, but Elliot is suspicious. They do find the place, with the unwilling help of Anita and her friend, two survivors who assist Elliot to rescue Adam when he gets trapped by falling debris.

Now at the Refuge, Adam and Elliot are separated. They decide to cool their relationship until Adam can come to terms with his sexuality. Of course, this is complicated by Elliot being arrested for disruptive behavior and the appearance of Jena, Adam's ex, who also claims to be pregnant.

Elliot meets Mason, an architect of the Refuge, while imprisoned. Mason knows the Refuge is a sinister place--and he's a sinister guy. He convinces Elliot and Adam to spring him from prison--and from the Refuge. Realizing that the projected YEARS of solar blackout are a gross exaggeration of the reality, Adam and Elliot assist Mason--and they escape, though not without casualties.

On their own, Adam and Elliot are set upon by scavengers. In order to keep these marauders at bay--and to broadcast a message for rescuers--Adam and Elliot agree to lead them to the Refuge--where they can find food and medical supplies, as well as access to a radio transmitter. They plan to break in, but when they arrive, they find the Refuge largely abandoned. That's not to say empty--there are plenty of menacing humans and creatures within its underground bunkers. Mason is now in charge, but he's clearly deranged and

poses a specific threat to the band of survivors.

With great risk, they find the radio and transmit their call for help, but they are attacked and lose some of their ranks. There is an HEA, but it's not the end of the story...

In truth, I would have stopped reading after the first 50 pages if I hadn't committed to read the whole book and write a review. The scientific facts on which this story is predicated are completely erroneous. That a gathering of perhaps 200 people in a city of 1.5 million survived earthquakes that rocked the area is such a ridiculous notion I couldn't wrap my brain around it. This wasn't a nuclear holocaust or a catastrophic virus outbreak--it was an earthquake. Lots of people survive earthquakes. That there was no coordinated National Guard/FEMA emergency response or hospital staff was simply too unrealistic to be acceptable. The writing is poor with horrible grammar, spelling and usage--so much so that the entire book needs a thorough line edit. Stat.

I didn't find the romance at all believable until the end of the book--when Adam and Elliot had learned enough about each other and themselves to be adequate partners to each other. Elliot started out as a very emo, effeminate man who grew up a lot in this survivor hellscape. Adam learned to express his emotions, and accept the love the Elliot offered.

This didn't work for me, as a romance, or a disaster story.

Alicja says

This collection includes three books of a series in one. I received it for free in exchange for an honest review.

Before the Darkness

"Are there any other survivors?"

"Are we the last two humans?"

sex

"There is a dark cloud of crap coming our way; will block the sun for years, rain down dust and debris.

Should we worry about it?"

"Nah, let's keep on walking and see how things go."

sex again

"What about food or water or even shelter?"

"We have a few granola bars and two bottles of water, we're good. And despite passing that water source we didn't stock up because, uh..."

more sex

"Oh we can take a bath in that freezing cold hot tub to wash ourselves."

even more sex

If you like to watch idiots survive the apocalypse while constantly ejaculating out what little brain cells they have left, then this is the book for you. Otherwise, I wasn't that impressed. Honestly, if I didn't have all three in the collection I wouldn't have read past this one.

Amid the Darkness

And then something happened... the story changed drastically and the plot became the focus, so did their relationship, and, oh good Himeros, there was no sex! Yup, the lust filled, frantic coupling of the first one gave way to substance. I had to double check I was reading the same series on my Kindle.

Make no mistake, this isn't some literary genius but the story became plotty focused on the mystery behind Refuge Inc. and its quirky characters. Our two lust-blinded lovers actually realized they were lust-blinded and a bit obsessive and they took a breather. I've actually started enjoying their post-apocalyptic journey.

Beyond the Darkness

This last book in the series was my favorite and way, way too short. It had so much potential to expand on this new world that I think it missed (although it was still very enjoyable). It had so much that I liked which I can't go into details without spoiling the first two. At the end it may have done the overemotional, melodramatic thing but aside from that it was a great (although too, too short) finale to the series.

Alicia says

(This book was received free in return for an honest review.)

This is a three book collection that I had a hard time reading through. If I really enjoy a book, I can easily finish it in one to two days. This series, however, I had to put away and read something else before I forced myself to continue reading. It wasn't all bad. Each book was slightly better written than the one before.

Book One: Before the Darkness. The story is post-asteroid impact in the western United States, with the setting of Phoenix, Arizona. The first two survivors we meet are Elliot and Adam. Elliot is out and proud, while Adam, an erotic dancer and frequent liar, is not out and unsure of his sexual tendencies. So of course they hook up. The writing style felt juvenile with the story flow being off. Often I could predict exactly what was going to happen in a given situation. Not necessarily a bad thing, but it led to my disinterest in the story.

Book Two: Amid the Darkness finds Elliot and Adam inside a survivor colony where they are separated by living quarters and job duties. Adam encounters his ex-fiancee and realizes his feelings for Elliot. The two also discover that the sanctuary is not all that it's purported to be. The romantic encounters in book two felt forced and I would have liked to see more interactions even if only light touches and stolen kisses.

Book Three: Beyond the Darkness. Elliot and Adam have made it out of the colony only to encounter three more survivors who convince them to return in an effort to find food and a radio. This was definitely the best written of the three books, although the writing was still stilted at times. The twist at the very end was very well done and probably the best part of the whole book.

A.L. says

I received a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review through the M/M Romance group's DBML (Don't buy me love) program.

I had previously read the first book in the series and wasn't completely happy with it. Mostly because the individual books end in a cliffhanger and I'm not a cliffhanger kind of person. I want to know the rest and I hate waiting for the next in the series. That's the reason I like this compilation more.

In the book, we have two people thrown together in a post apocalyptic world (even if it's only their tiny portion of the world).

(view spoiler)

There are a few things in the books that stretch credibility.(view spoiler)

As individual books, I wouldn't like them as much because of the cliffhanger endings. As a compilation, where you can just start the next book, it's better. (Note The star rating here and on Amazon are slightly different because Amazon has a different star rating and it's still a "liked it" but 4 stars instead of three here.)

Xing says

DNF @ 9%

Wow, that was quick. But I really didn't need to read on to know that I would have really, really disliked the rest of the story and this series.

Some of it was the writing style - pretty much 99% telling, 1% showing. Which isn't good for a story that should be charged with emotions after a series of world-ending events.

Most of it was Elliot and Adam. Elliot came off as a whiny bitch - too busy crying about how they (i.e. he and Adam) are going to die. Preferring to stay ignorant, complains about stupid shit, and pretty much becoming a character that is easily dislikeable. And Adam? He's the quick thinker, the survivalist. But even his background and attitude came off as an eye-rolling experience. It's like the author tried to make him into a complex, interesting character but ended up the complete opposite due to messy execution.

So all in all:'

Roger - president of NBR United - says

I got this book for free in exchange for an honest review through the DBML program at the M/M Romance Group at goodreads.com.

This was a hard one to rate because I wanted to rate it higher because of the writing quality which was top rate but I just could not get emotionally attached to this book. the one thing I learned is that I absolutely hate post apocalyptic literature from an emotional stand point. (reviewer note -- first time I have read post apocalyptic literature)

I felt that this story, while very well written, dragged on for me. I almost wanted to take a gun to the main characters just to get it over with. If I liked the story type I could see bonding with the MCs, but I felt distanced from them.

If you like this type of story read it, if you are neutral to this type read it, but if you hate it, it isn't worth the time investment to read it. I would say from what little I do know about post apocalyptic this is a standout of the genre.

Naelana says

I received a free copy of this book in return for an honest review.

I only found this set of three books "ok". I didn't have a problem reading it to the end, but it didn't grip me completely.

The characters didn't call to me, and certainly in the first book, I didn't find myself longing that they find safety in the post apocalyptic universe that the series is set in. I liked the dog though and was upset when he was hurt!!

I don't think its the genre, I usually like different (post apocalyptic / dystopian) universes and the book was well written, so I think it was the characters who didn't quite click for me.

Had I bought the first book alone, sadly I don't think I'd have bought the subsequent ones, and that would have been a shame since I think they actually got better as they went along (perhaps the characters grew on me)! The suspense in the last book was well written.

I didn't find some things believable (mostly that there was no aid getting to the survivors - the explanation just didn't work for me) but I was willing to go along with them so that the story worked.

Donald says

Listening to the complete Darkness Collection was both interesting and entertaining. The story of Elliot, Adam, and Triton encompasses the gambit of emotional twists and turns and is somewhat exhausting...which is what would occur at the time of the apocalypse (I would assume). This is a tale with coming to terms, mystery, intrigue, lunacy, and things that make you go hmm. Enjoyed the story, the narrator took a bit

getting use to but once that happened, the story flowed nicely. Certainly recommend for anyone who wants a taste of what might be...

Will Lutes says

This series had a number of things going for it. The apocalyptic element alone is always fertile ground for heightened drama (one has only to look at the recent spate of such books, movies and TV shows that have latched onto this thematic element to prove this point). Fear is what is driving society these days. Ms. Sanders attempt to flesh out her own apocalyptic world is a valiant effort.

Adam and Elliot are the protagonist couple in this series. They are flawed characters who, despite their flaws, are likable enough to warrant a reader to find out what happens to them. This is crucial to the series and not one that many writers do so well with. Apocalyptic environs can become trapped and mired in their own daily sludge. Ms. Sanders keeps things moving along at a brisk pace so while the decay and rot permeate every facet of her world, you don't feel like you have to slog your way through it.

Characters move in and out of the men's lives as they try to unravel the events surrounding an asteroid disaster that has befallen Earth. All is not what it seems - which adds mystery to the men's plight as they try to hold on in this rapidly devolving world to each other as well as just keeping a hold of their own lives.

The secondary characters are drawn quite well. This gives something for Adam and Elliot to push against in the series. Though several plot turns I saw coming well before they arrived which led to a formulaic tone to the books. That's not to say they aren't worth reading. Adam and Elliot are likable enough that I think that their journey is worth the time to discover how they get through it all in the end.

Sadly, the book does have some mechanical flaws (editorial in nature) that would serve the series better if a more exacting eye was trained upon the books (examples being 'of of' in the middle of a sentence, or the word 'plan' when it should've been 'plain' given the context of the paragraph where these appeared). It happened frequently enough that it took me out of the moment.

Still all and all, I recommend the series as the tale is, on the whole, a fast moving piece with enough turns to keep a reader happy whilst lounging around on a deck chair near the pool or at the beach.

Bookjunkie12 says

I was given a free copy of this book by the author for an honest review.

This was a very interesting collection of books (there are three in the series). It made me question what would you do if you woke up one morning and there was no one but you and the world as you knew it was no more...do you give up hope or do you take a chance and try to survive? Those are the questions our MC's have to ask themselves.

All three books together I really enjoyed but if I had only read the first one I don't think I would have picked up the remaining two. That means the books got more interesting (for me). The first one was good Elliot and Adam meeting and falling for each other while the world around them falls apart. While falling for each

other they are also looking for this illusive Refuge Inc. and trying to survive. The first book also deals with Adam admitting to himself that he is gay and accepting it, and Elliot knowing he might be a little needy but that he is also strong enough to face life.

The first ends with Adam and Elliot thinking, on some level, that they have made it to the promise land. Book two proves everything isn't always what it seems. They are now at Refuge Inc. and there are hundreds of survivors living in the underground compound. There is more action and suspense in this book because Elliot and Adam are both starting to see beyond the lies. They fight for their lives to take a chance on the unknown world outside of Refuge Inc.

The third book was even better because now Adam and Elliot are facing the unknown together. They are almost out of food and supplies and another group of survivors try to rob them. Faced with the need for more supplies and the need to be rescued they return to Refuge Inc. with a new plan of hope. In this book even more lies are uncovered and the danger to them is even greater. The twist toward the end had my stomach in knots.

Overall this was a interesting collection of stories but I didn't love it there was something missing but I'm not sure what it was. I like the post-apocalyptic theme and conspiracy laced through the stories but something was a miss for me on this one.

Masquerade Crew says

2 reviews

Reviewer: Levon

4.0 on the Masq Scale

Before The Darkness (Book 1)

In the first book we meet Elliot Stewart who is smack dab in the middle of a disaster. A huge asteroid has hit the Earth and obliterated most of his city of Phoenix. He starts a trek to nowhere in particular thinking that he is the only person alive until he runs into Adam Weber who is somewhat more equipped to deal with the stresses. Elliot uses him as a crutch to get him through the ills of his world. Naturally, Elliot, being a gay man, becomes attracted to Adam who was abandoned by his fiancee Jena before the asteroid hit. The two bond closer and intimately throughout their adventure then they discover Refuge Inc where they believe they will finally be saved. I felt this book was predictable and weirdly coincidental.

Amid The Darkness (Book 2)

In the second book our two protagonists are shut away in the Refuge Inc compound with many others. Now that they are in somewhat safe confines they are forced to deal with their intimate connection. Not to give away any spoilers but there were a lot of surprises and info dumps in this book. I still loved our two main characters in this book but it was a bit too much for me making it a difficult read. I understand certain questions have to be answered but the read was slow at times and exhausting with the onslaught of info. I also believe the added drama added nothing to the overall story or feel of the plot.

Beyond The Darkness (Book 3)

In my opinion this book was the best of the 3. We are introduced to three new characters in the post-

apocalyptic wilderness of Arizona. In an effort to steal food and supplies, Dylan, Mira, and Tyler are thrust upon Elliot and Adam. As a somewhat bargain due to info that the world is in war with N Korea, they decide to return to Refuge Inc to use the radio for a distress signal. When the group reaches the building it's not as they left it. They end up running into some old characters and new revelations. This book is filled with so much suspense that you are literally on the edge of your seat right through the epilogue. The only minus is that the prologue was confusing and could've been removed but this book alone increased my rating by half a star. Great save.

John B. also reviewed this book. 5.0 on the Masq Scale. See his review here!

John Brownstone says

I was able to sink my teeth into this book and not put it down till I was finished with it. The plot is engaging as are the characters. Elliot finds himself facing a changed world after an asteroid strike devastates Earth. Adam is coming out of a bad relationship and is questioning his identity.

When the two meet in their struggle for survival they begin to learn about one another and they begin to shed their old skin and learn how to survive in this new world.

The relationship between Elliot and Adam had me rooting for them throughout the book. Dealing with the end of life as we know it and seeing two people coming together and the hope of something springing from it had me rooting for the home team of humanity.

The book is filled with thrills, moments where I found myself holding my breath. In the search for help they find a crazy dystopian leader of survivors that lends a plot twist of political and sociological twists to the plot.

Elliot through all of it hangs on to his humanity almost to a fault, yet it gave me pause to think of how I might react in a similar situation. If faced with the same ordeals could I be half of what he was; that would be something to strive for.

Adam is conflicted with who he is and battles back and forth within himself. He is in essence the everyday pragmatic man who knows deep down who he is but doesn't admit it to himself till he is forced to come face to face with himself.

I was glad all three of the books were bundled into one, it allowed me to follow through the series. The characters were engaging, the story line good which all added to me liking this book. Overall if you like SciFi that incorporates humanity, political twists, sociological experiments, and survival I would recommend this book hands down.
