



Cranberry Queen

Kathleen DeMarco

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Diana Moore, a thirty-something professional in New York City, is brooding over rumors about her ex-lovers beautiful new girlfriend, when the unimaginable happens: a terrible car accident in which her entire family is killed. Seeking refuge from her well-meaning friends, Diana heads out of the city and ends up in the Pine Barrens, an oasis of simple living in New Jersey where cranberry bogs abound. There, in a place where no one knows her history, Diana is free to take a hard look at her life and to begin to explore avenues of change and renewal.

Cranberry Queen Details

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From Reader Review *Cranberry Queen* for online ebook

Jennifer says

A quick read but one that didn't quite work for me. Diana Moore is fleeing New York City to escape a recent family tragedy and in a moment of distraction hits an old woman on a motorcycle. The woman is fine but this chance encounter leads Diana to a new set of relationships and a beautiful location, the Pine Barrens in New Jersey. I liked how uncomfortably realistic Diana's inner life is and the descriptions of the setting are evocative, but the overall plot had some believability issues that I couldn't quite get around.

Karen says

Took this on vacation with me and finished it a couple days ago before my return to Alaska. I must say the only reason I finished this book was because I only had 2 with me. It was slow and just not very interesting. The descriptions on the pine barrens and cranberry fields were interesting since I've never been there. It sound beautiful! I may have to make it out that way someday.

Amy says

Once in a while you stumble upon a book that, while it may not be the most well crafted writing in the world, it touches something inside you and causes you to dig deep inside yourself and reflect on life.

Cranberry Queen was one such book. I picked it up over a year ago, as possible fodder for one of the OBCZs. I've passed it by multiple times when glancing over the stacks, trying to choose my next read. I picked up up now, because I'd hoped it would be a title that could qualify for a challenge (it doesn't). But when I found it didn't qualify, I didn't put it down. I kept reading. It is having a profound impact on me. Who would have thought that a little paperback I picked up for pennies at a place that sells used books by the pound, would make me ponder life so much....

It centers on a woman readjusting her life after a horrible car accident. (She wasn't in it, but her entire family was.) The back of the book just mentions an accident, not what it was, etc, but it's all about recovery, and it had been so long since I'd registered it, that I completely forgotten the publisher's blurb. The entire family-- her parents and brother, are killed by a drunk driver while driving to a "meet the parents" dinner with his new fiance's folks.

It is no secret that I love my family. They are my treasure, my heart and my hope. I remember when I first realized that love, in all its glory, was a two edged sword. That by opening your heart to another, and laying it on the line for the cause of love, you became vulnerable. I'm not talking about the kind of vulnerability where someone hurts or betrays you. What I am referring to is the vulnerability of mishap or accident. If something happened to me- an accident, illness or whatever, it would be hard and painful, but it would be me. I could deal with that. And if I die, I die. My beliefs in life help me to accept my fate after life. If I am alone, not opened by love, the circle of my life is one. Something happens, the implications don't radiate beyond that circle.

But when you love, you are vulnerable by extension. The safety you worry about is not your own, but that of your beloved. To hurt, it no longer has to happen to you but to the one you love.

Death happens. I know that. But premature or unexpected death is one of my horrors. I don't know how I might cope-- what strengths I might find or what depths I'd plunge. I still don't know, and I hope I never do. But this little volume made me take out all my worries and fears, shake them out and air them on the line, and let the breath of prayer and hope blow through them again.

Karen says

I loved this story. When the unthinkable happens, what would you do?

Jill says

Great story--I actually balled at the end. Lay off, I was fragile. Some books you just read at the right time in your life, and this was one of them.

Stephanie says

I had a completely different expectation when I decided to pick up CRANBERRY QUEEN by Kathleen DeMarco. I anticipated an easy, breezy, light-hearted read, but it ended up being so much more than that.

Diana Moore, 33, cannot get over the day her ex-boyfriend - affectionately name "The Monster" - dumped her for another woman. Life can't possibly get worst than the love of your life breaking your heart into a million little pieces. But it does. In one shot she loses her entire family in a horrific drunk driving accident. As if her sanity wasn't already hanging by a thread.

From that point of her life, Diana becomes a fevered zombie. Feeling repressed and misunderstood by all those around her, Diana makes an impulse decision to quit her job and attempt an escape from all of her problems.

While driving, with no destination in mind, she ends up getting into her own accident, rear-ending a 70 year old grandma named Rosie riding a motorcycle. This accident proves to be a blessing in disguise, bringing her to southern NJ where she befriends Rosie's glamorous granddaughter Louisa.

As Diana waits the few days for her car to get fixed by the town's mechanic, she takes Rosie and Louisa's offer up to stay with them. Diana wavers between the pleasure of a cheerful new location and her proverbial self-condemnations. At the same time, Louisa's ex-boyfriend, who she is still in love with, finds Diana striking and mysterious. She undeniably feels the same way, making Louisa mad, but bringing to Diana the renewal and self-confidence she desperately needed.

This was a book that for some reason or another tugged at my heart and became an instant favorite. I have no idea why I loved it as much as I did as it wasn't flawlessly written, but I think that without a doubt it was an overall inspiring story about the stumbling blocks of life and the triumphs of overcoming them.

Michelle says

This is a book that's been sitting on my shelf for years... in my summer quest to clear some space, I dove in. In my opinion, it was a decent read. Full of contradictions and at times disjointed and unrealistic. I thought The main character was well developed but the secondary characters were left incomplete.

Jodi says

I have two words to summarize this book... Don't Bother!!!

The main character has absolutely no depth whatsoever. She is so self-centered and egocentric that she takes the accidental death of her family as a personal assault on her. According to her, all eyes must be on her, and the only voice heard is hers.

I could not relate to such a child like, immature character. I only finished it to see how it ended, and even that was a disappointment.

Lenore says

I really enjoyed & related to this books topic of loss. I have felt similar loss after losing my mom, dad, sister and brother. My mom and dad on the same day. It is pretty heart wrenching. It takes time to feel "normal". Waves of grief roll over in and out. Like the tides.

Jennifer says

This is an amazing book. Instead of doing a review (because in all honesty, I just loved everything about it and that isn't helpful on it's own in a review) I'll add some of my favorite quotes.

"He-the Monster-is now dating someone whose name begins with "L". I think her name is Lola or maybe, possibly, Lolita. (Tiptoeing off the tounge. How lovely. Lovely Lola Lolita) The Monster, everyone say is much better now. He doesn't drink (I'm not around) and he doesn't smoke (I'm not around) and he doesn't stay out all night and ring "L's" doorbell at 4:30 in the morning (drunk and smoky). He's older, wiser and unwilling to go backward into that great abyss that reads me."

"This time, there are no tears. This time, there is only emptiness and I feel it set in the straight line of my mouth. I am not strong enough for this. I want an earthquake, a hurricane, anything - even a devil, the one with the cloven hoof - Mrs. Leed's unfortunate 13th child - to rush out and stomp on me, break me into little pieces and hurl me to the stars, let me go back with those people I love. Please."

"Please, God. I am a smart woman, I know words, I've read books; he's just a guy, he's just a person, I can speak to him. "Hmm," I say, and during the subsequent silence, I consider ways to kill myself."

"That's why an Angelina Jolie is always going to win over a Winona Ryder. Fuckups are more interesting."

Read it. It's delicious :)

Crystal says

There wasn't much of an actual plot to this book, and I found the characters to be really unrealistic. Diana, the main character, was supposed to be thirty-three-years-old, but she was so immature that she felt much younger to me. I kept forgetting her actual age. Louisa was a total bitch, the "love interest" broke his engagement for a woman he'd only known for one day (and barely even spoke to), and some old guy chased the same woman across an entire state just to offer her a job. It just felt totally fantastic and unnecessary.

Bruceandjackygmail.Com says

Not the most captivating book and the main character irritated me, but the writing was good. Disappointing ending...was expecting something a bit meatier overall.

Lyn (Readinghearts) says

This book was a recommendation to me from two of my best GR buddies. These ladies and have a lot in common as far as reading goes, so I was excited when Jennifer said that she came across this book at a book store and really liked it, then when Colleen read it and also liked it. Sure enough, right off the bat, I could tell I was going to like the voice of the main character (the story was told in the first person). She was sarcastic, but it was a witty sarcasm, which I really enjoy. Three pages into the book, though, tragedy struck, and everything changed. The main character went from a brash, sarcastic, self doubter to a lost, confused victim. The more lost and confused she got, the more confused I became as a reader. I both liked and didn't like where the author was taking me. A perfect example is when Diana talks about being angry that people keep asking her how she is, but being angry later when they accept her "I'm fine" and she is left alone. On the one hand, this behavior seems childish and pathetic. On the other hand, I can see myself doing the same thing in a similar situation. There are many such places in the book where I feel good and bad at the same time.

I have always had a hard time with people who just accept being a victim, and as this seems to happen to Diana the book started to lag a bit for me. But just when I thought the author was going to wallow in the main character's lost withdrawal, Diana makes a rash decision and ends up in rural New Jersey with a cast of refreshingly flawed supporting characters. Rosie, Louisa, Jack, Fritz, and Billy really made the book for me. I became very vested in how they were all going to interact (which, by the way, was in a very Big Chill sort of way).

In the end, Diana finally mans up and gets her life back together, and things end up with the author alluding to a Happily Ever After ending. Here again, I both liked it and didn't like it. It was satisfying that Diana was able to work through her issues, in fact, when I finished the book I actually sighed with contentment. On the other hand...I felt that it took her too long to get to this point (although chronologically it was only two days, lol) and that the happy ending was just a little too formulaic.

I am giving this book 3.75 stars, but not 4. Although I liked the story and the supporting characters were flawed enough to make them interesting, the story lagged for me in places.

Jennifer says

My friend loaned me this, which seems to be a theme amongst it's readers, it being passed down from one person to another. My copy is nicely worn and dog-eared like crazy.

I did like this book, I thought it was nicely written with some beautiful prose thrown in here and there, and it did tug at my heartstrings at times. I, like many others have been witness to terrible tragedies, and we yearn to deal with the conflicting emotions pressed upon us, but do not know how. I especially related to wanting to run away, to be in a new environment and be with new people who had no idea who I was or what I was experiencing.

This book mostly takes place in Pine Barrens, a seemingly magical town in rural New Jersey, where Diana, a woman who has just suffered a terrible loss, ends up after hitting an old woman, Rosie, with her car. Here she meets Louisa, Rosies' foul-mouthed granddaughter and an unlikely friendship ensues. There are many scenes in which Diana gazes thoughtfully at cranberry bogs and butterflies, contends with Louisa's mood swings, and falls in love. This all happens in about two days. All I could think of while reading this book was who would play these people in the movie. Reese Witherspoon as Diana maybe, with Julia Roberts as Louisa? I don't know, but this book has feel-good movie written all over it. Not too much depth but sure to tug at your heartstrings, except that I have to admit that the movie will probably be better than the book. Like I said before, I thought it was beautifully written at times, but the character development was weak, I didn't care too much for anyone here, except Rosie, and the ending was too neatly wrapped up for me, but all and all pretty good, especially since this is the author's first book I believe. So back to my friend it goes, where she will no doubt pass it on to someone else.

CD says

A screenplay styled treatment about a tragedy and drama plagued woman that borders on self-indulgence by the writer.

Not recommended.

Kathy says

Silly chick flick. I have no patience for stories about insecure women.

Sarah says

I would actually give this book 3.5 stars. I liked it better when I started it than I did when I finished, although I did enjoy the ending.

The heroine came across as somewhat younger than her actual age in the book, which may be partly explained by the horrific circumstances that she found herself in.

I thought the writing was very good and I very much enjoyed the descriptions of New Jersey.

Amy says

An entertaining piece of fluff. Cute book for the beach - especially since all of it takes place in NJ. :)

My favorite part of this book is this excerpt:

"...I turn off at Exit Nine. New Brunswick. A river - the Camden? the Roanoke? (no, idiot, that's in Virginia)-streams underneath the overpass. I go onto Route One, South. No reason.

But Route One isn't working either. It is lined, at first, with green lawns and trees, buffeting the entrance to either Johnson & Johnson's massive headquarters or the campus of Cook College's agriculture school. Then the road bequeaths strip malls and Taco Bells and just too many traffic lights. This is not what I want, although I have no idea what I want. I take the next exit, Finnegan's Lane, I think.

Then I am on a mishmash of roads, Routes 518 and 522 and 527 and 547 and 539; I have no idea where I am. If you grow up in Princeton, all you learn is how to get to New York City. (A friend with whom I grew up used to say, "New York City, gulp, is the center of the universe; I mean, you can fly to both Moscow and Paris from there!") Maybe, if your parents wanted some cultural diversion, you'll know how to get to Philadelphia. and maybe on a true "road" trip, you'll go the long way, via Lambertville and New Hope and Bucks County; past streams and green trees and chic artistic boutiques and picturesque bridges, to see the "country."

But Princeton, to many of the families that live there, is simply not New Jersey. It is Princeton, a place unto itself. Moreover, this sentiment is never voiced-a true Princetonian would never need to note its distinctiveness. Like Caroline Kennedy or President George H Bush, the need to assert one's dignity or otherwise account for one's subtlety and innate aplomb is nonsensical, a ballet dancer pirouetting in a swamp. In any event, the Princeton I grew up in is pristine, classic, a university town above all else, nothing garish or loud, neither in architecture nor inhabitants...But now I am driving in what looks to be Iowa (I have never been to Iowa, but I know it looks like this.) It can't be New Jersey. This is land, real land, green and outstretched, a verdant expanse as long as a Caribbean beach, bordered not by an ocean, but by tall, multicolored, autumn-painted, red, gold, and green trees...I feel like Alice, tumbling down a rabbit hole in a fantasy place labeled the Garden State. I grew up in New Jersey I've been to rural places (in Maine, not New Jersey, but how different can it be?), yet this is very strange. I stop the car and get out. I am on the side of the road near a farm of some sort, a farm where there are rows and rows of small bushes about five feet high, planted equidistant in what looks to be sand...I step to the bush. I see a cluster of small clumps, dried clumps of...berries, blueberries, I realize. This is where they come from; this is how they grow. For some reason, I thought they only grew in Maine...Maine blueberries reek intrinsically of estates and reserve; New Jersey blueberries by definition must reek of noxious gases and neon. Could there be some association between big-haired Jersey girls and these small dried berries in my hand?...This is a foreign land; this is a strange place. This is New Jersey?"

It's only about two pages in the book, but I love that part. The part when the "Princetonian" gains understanding that the "Garden State" isn't all industry and landfills. And that we didn't get that name because of all of the pretty flowers. I love when people "discover" our state and all its resplendent beauty - even if the protagonist grew up only 45 minutes or so away - in Princeton. Of course we should have known she was hopeless when she thought the river running through New Brunswick was the Camden!? Or even the

Roanoke!?! Right there, I just wanted to say "Really? The Roanoke?" Yikes! Good thing she only ended up in the Pine Barrens and NOT Camden (or Virginia).

Sharon Werner says

Main character Diana comes across as very shallow, despite her tragedy. While the novel addresses the desperation and loneliness of those "left behind" after her family's death, it harps too much on her lost love. How much does she have to go through to realize there is more to life? I did enjoy reading about the familiar locations.

LeighAnn says

One of my first chick-lit books; will always have a place in my heart.
I feel in love with the cover...
