



## Redemption Song

*Laura Wilkinson*

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## **Redemption Song** Laura Wilkinson

If you lost everything in one night, what would you do?

Saffron is studying for a promising career in medicine until a horrific accident changes her life for ever. Needing to escape London, she moves to a small coastal town to live with her mother. Saffron hates the small town existence and feels trapped until she meets Joe, another outsider. Despite initial misgivings, they grow closer to each other as they realise they have a lot in common. Like Saffron, Joe has a complicated past ... one that's creeping up on his present. Can Joe escape his demons for long enough to live a normal life – and can Saffron reveal the truth about what really happened on that fateful night? Love is the one thing they need most, but will they – can they – risk it?

Redemption Song is a captivating, insightful look at what happens when everything goes wrong – and the process of putting the pieces back together again.

## **Redemption Song Details**

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Author : Laura Wilkinson

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## From Reader Review Redemption Song for online ebook

### Anne says

Nothing gives me greater pleasure than finding an author with a unique voice, and an ability to tell a wonderful story that captures your heart. The author has said that she writes the sort of books she likes to read - well, she writes the sort of books I love to read too. I could simply pick words out of the press release - this is a book all about love and loss, moving on with the support of friends and family, honesty and forgiveness, guilt and hatred. Powerful stuff, beautifully handled, but the one thing you don't get from that list is how this book will make you feel. This is a book you will experience, heart pounding, stomach aching as you hope beyond hope that things will work out for characters that you've grown to love like your own family.

Let's talk about those characters a little. They're complicated, wonderfully alive, people you might know: they're all a little bruised and damaged, hurting just below the surface, hiding secrets, just trying to get on with life. The central story is really about the two outsiders, Saffron and Joe - and it's a story that will touch you to the heart. But they're surrounded by other wonderfully drawn characters. I quite adored Saffron's mother Rain, with her faith and approach to life, her love for her daughter and her emotions so visible at times: I loved her interactions with eccentric locals (Mair is simply wonderful, and just like a Welsh aunt I remember), her efforts to hold things together, her wry sense of humour and her deep capacity for love.

Other characters were so real to me too - the lovely Ceri, honest and gentle Eifion... even the lad from Liverpool who helped out on the roof job and the lady who ran the shop. The dialogue is quite exceptional - natural, unforced, real conversations that you can hear in your head as you read. And I have to say - because I know about such things - that she captures quite perfectly the cadences of Welsh speech without any of those small annoyances that can sometimes affect my enjoyment of Wales-based novels.

The setting is incredibly vivid. Perhaps it helped that I know Llandudno - sorry, Coed Mawr - well, but I could picture so vividly every scene she described. No, it's unfair to attribute that to knowing the setting - not all the features are there in the town I know, but it's quite wonderful, the way Coed Mawr comes alive, almost as an extra character. The author has a real gift for creating images - Joe on the roof, the bonfire outside the cottage - and I was really struck by how visual this book was, as well as being very deeply moving.

Can I say I've found another favourite author? Yes, of course I can. One of my books of the year? I think yes. No, that's a definite yes. I loved this book so much - I wanted to get to the end, to see if everything turned out the way I wanted it to for these wonderful people that I ached for, but I could also have stayed in Coed Mawr for ever. This was such a special read - and so many others will love it every bit as much as I did.

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### Holly says

Originally reviewed for Bookaholic Confessions

Set in the Welsh seaside town of Coed Mawr, *Redemption Song* tells the story of mother and daughter Rain and Saffron. After a tragic accident changes the course of both of their lives Saffron moves to Coed Mawr to be close to her mother in an attempt to escape her memories, but it soon becomes apparent that Rain is

struggling to escape some memories of her own.

Whilst feeling trapped in Coed Mawr Saffron ends up meeting Joe who rescues her when her car breaks down in the middle of nowhere. Despite meeting purely by chance, there is an immediate spark between the two but it appears that they are both reluctant to get close to anyone. They also both have no intention of sticking around the small seaside town. However, it seems that neither of them can out-run the attraction that they share, but why are they both so reluctant to let their guards down and what exactly is it that they are they so afraid of?

If you're a regular reader of my blog then you will know that Laura Wilkinsons' previous novel, *Public Battles, Private Wars*, was one of my favourite reads of 2014. So well researched and brilliantly written, I have been eagerly awaiting more from Laura ever since I turned the very last page.

So you can imagine my delight when the opportunity to review Laura's latest novel, *Redemption Song*, arose. I will be the first to admit that I had ridiculously high expectations and whilst this book is a million miles away from *Public Battles Private Wars*, I still enjoyed it every bit as much.

I love how Laura has crafted the characters for this novel. They are so distinctive and memorable, with such unique voices. I grew to like them all immediately and all for different reasons. Rain because she was such a memorable, realistic and strong woman. Rain is actually a Minister and I found the religious aspect of the novel added a unique angle to the story. Rain is one of those characters who you will easily bond with and I found myself feeling really attached to her as the story went on.

Saffron and Joe were also fascinating characters. Saffron's pain is very raw and understandably she is finding life difficult after everything that's happened. It's not long before we discover exactly why Saffron feels the way she does and I really felt for her. She was a great character to read about, although at times it felt as though she was much younger than twenty-five.

Joe also intrigued me. We don't get to uncover his secret until much further on in the story and I was desperate to know what he was running from. I had so many questions – who was Allegra? Why did Joe not want to be discovered? Why was he planning revenge? I HAD to find out and there was no way I was putting this story down until the truth had been uncovered.

The supporting characters in *Redemption Song* were wonderful and equally as important to the story. Ceri was my favourite and as soon as she was described as 'the Welsh Vicky Pollard' I knew I was going to love her. I grew pretty fond of Eifion, too.

The setting of Coed Mawr was utterly perfect. Whilst it may not be the most glamorous or bustling of places, Laura made me want to go there and I had no trouble envisaging the surroundings. I want to visit Eifion's rock shop, I want to go to Y Castell, I want to sample the doughnuts on the pier. It was such a fitting setting for the story that unfolded and it sounded beautiful to me.

Whilst this is quite a complex story with many layers, Laura is such a talented storyteller that she paces it perfectly, ensuring that you find out all that you need to know about various characters at just the right times. The story is narrated by Rain, Saffron and Joe and it is extremely clever how we are privy to Joe's internal dialogue but never uncover his secrets until we are meant to.

I also MUST mention the ending of the story which was truly perfect. As good endings should be, it was the missing piece of the puzzle and it left me feeling emotional yet extremely satisfied.

The way that Laura tackled the topic of grief was done in such an admirable way. There's a particular paragraph which stuck with me and that is when Rain was thinking about the shape and size of her grief and saying how it changed shape constantly as it 'slipped from her fingers, springing into the air'. I think a lot of readers will be able to identify with the feelings and emotions that Rain, Saffron and Joe experience. It's amazing how grief can make us respond to things and how grief can completely change our perceptions.

Laura uncovers so many truths in this novel and it's one that is guaranteed to make you stop and think.

Redemption Song is an intriguing and realistic take on one families struggle to survive all that life has thrown at them. It's full of emotion, drama and is a hugely memorable and addictive read.

You are now looking at a fully fledged Laura Wilkinson fan...

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### **Sarah Thorogood says**

How would you come back from something so bad that you lost everything in one night? Could you and what would you do? That is the question haunting Saffron. She runs away from a promising career in medicine and moves in with her mum, living in a small coastal town. But the town and existence is choking her and she hates it here, not knowing what to do with herself. And then she meets Joe. He is an outsider too and despite him not giving much away, the two grow closer. But the pair both have secrets they are hiding, can they live a normal life and let the love in that they both desperately need? I love Laura's books. They have a strong heart to them, surrounded by strong but relate-able characters. The author also builds up the sense of place, a part of the story that's just as important as the characters that live there. I was swept up in the drama from the very start and loved the way the story built up, not giving too much away until the very end. I've been wanting to read this book for so long and it certainly didn't disappoint. Its about forgiveness, and not just forgiving others, but also yourself.

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### **Karen's World says**

What a great read, nice happy story that flows really well. Characters link together great making the reading a pleasure. You can tell I loved the book as finished it quick, would of been quicker if I ignored everything. It kept you guessing about something which I loved as you can imagine all sorts of things. I never guessed what it was though so that is brilliant. Loved this book and the author, look forward to reading another book soon.

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### **Abigail (Abbie) Osborne says**

An exploration of the journey of navigating through life trying to find love whilst taking the knocks and punches of reality.

Read my full review here:

<http://www.manybooksmanylives.com/201...>

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### **Terry Tyler says**

Reviewed by me as part of Rosie Amber's review team

3.5 stars

Redemption Song starts off on a lonely track in wintry North Wales when Saffron de Lacy's car breaks down and the mysterious Joe comes to her aid. He learns she is a Baptist minister's daughter; when he drives her home she invites him in, and he meets her mother, Rain.

The story tells of three people's road back from emotional trauma, and alternates between the points of view of Saffron, Joe and Rain. This is done very well, with each character's section revealing their hidden side without overdoing it, each character's 'voice' different enough to be convincing. A quick mention for the amusing surprise at the end of Chapter Three - like Joe, I didn't see it coming at all!

Rain is very real, and likable, but I found it hard to connect with either Joe or Saffron at first, as Saffron is an twenty-five year old, qualified doctor who behaves like a stroppy teenager, and Joe is a slightly rough and ready carpenter with the vocabulary of one much more educated; however, it soon becomes clear that there are many secrets to come out, about all three main characters, and these explain the incongruities; it was the slow drip of information that kept me turning the pages. I found myself particularly eager to discover the truth about Joe, who I definitely started to fancy as the book went on :)

The minor characters are more immediately appealing. I could see Saffron's friend Ceri (the 'Welsh Vicky Pollard'!) straight away, and also her lovely father and Saffron's boss at Wynne's 'department store'; I've lived in small town Norfolk, and Wynne's sounded just like Cromer Indoor Market. Very well drawn.

I chose this to review because I adored Laura Wilkinson's debut, 'Public Battles, Private Wars', set during the 1980s miners' strike. It's equally well written, but it's a very different sort of book, a slow paced, gradual unfolding with lots of detail, rather than a down-to-earth, events orientated drama. It's about the journey rather than the destination!

A nicely structured drama for readers who enjoy curling up and getting to know their characters in an in-depth fashion.

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### **Elaine Fraser says**

I love the way Wilkinson writes about a particular time and place and captures setting details that cause you to know the place as well the people in the story. The Welsh landscape and ordinary people with extraordinary life circumstances, are inextricably linked and draw you in to the story.

I found the opening of the novel to be a gentle introduction that built into an intense set of events in a seemingly ordinary town in Wales. The characters' lives are drawn in such a way that the reader feels like they know them. We want to get to know them better and hope that life works out for them. To garner this sympathy takes great skill as a writer.

After a car accident, in which Saffron loses both her father and fiancé, she drops out of medical school and is back living with her mother, Rain (a minister) and they tiptoe around each other. Both have secrets and tell lies, mostly by omission. This aspect was really interesting as it shows how mothers and daughters can often misunderstand each other and project feelings onto each other. This conflict was a great plot driver and

human study.

Another interesting aspect is the way Rain is portrayed as a gutsy, down-to-earth minister of religion. She's not stereotypically ineffective, nor super-comedic like the Vicar of Dibley, she's smart and funny and real. Her spirituality provides the reader with a Christian figure with whom one might want as a friend.

Joe, the handsome love interest, also has secrets, and his secrets become entwined with Saffron and Rain's world. He is drawn in by Rain's spirituality, and instead of some great conversion experience, he finds a place where he can find peace and acceptance.

As someone who reads for inspiration, I found that the human dilemmas of the characters and the way they worked them out was satisfying. People find strength in truth, authenticity and gritty spirituality that is a far cry from romanticised denial of the realities of life and relationships.

Brava Laura!

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### **Sarah says**

Whilst 'Redemption Song' shares the same easy-going, unaffected writing style as her last novel, Laura Wilkinson's latest offering feels quite different from her breakthrough, 'Public Battles, Private Wars'. Whereas 'Public Battles...' was set in the 1980s against the backdrop of the miners' strike, 'Redemption Song' is set in contemporary North Wales and is less political and more personal in its focus. When Saffron and Joe meet in a small seaside town, they are attracted to one another yet filled with trepidation. Both have secrets, both are scared: will they be able to be honest with themselves and with each other? Engaging and lively, empathetic and addictive, I was hooked from the off on this romance that will appeal to young and older readers alike including fans of Paige Toon, Sarah Morgan, Dorothy Koomson and Diane Chamberlain. 4.5 stars.

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### **Shirley Golden says**

I'm already a fan of Laura Wilkinson's work, and her latest novel doesn't disappoint.

'Redemption Song' is the story of loss, betrayal, finding love, and learning to trust again. It is told through three characters' viewpoints: the grieving mother and daughter, Rain and Saffron, and an elusive stranger, Joe. This trio of viewpoints works well, with each section feeling distinct. The way Joe is given a voice yet kept elusive must have been quite a juggling act, but it's one that is managed expertly.

The small town setting of Coed Mawr in Wales, is beautifully imagined to the point that I could have been standing on the beach, feeling the chill breeze, and smelling the brackish air!

But as always, it is the complex characters and emotional punch that drew me in so well (I sat up until 1am to finish the final third of the book). Recommended.

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### **Alison says**

Saffron and her mother Rain have moved to North Wales to start again after a tragedy that has caused them heartbreak, guilt, and confusion. Joe is also running, trying to escape a past that haunts him while simultaneously bent on revenge.

The story is told from three different points of view - Saffron, Rain and Joe. In many novels, this can be confusing, but Laura Wilkinson is a skilful writer and the point of view changes are seamless, with each character having their own distinct voice. The different points of view give a fresh perspective on many of the issues facing the characters and the conflicts between them.

The author has a real ability to give a sense of time and place. Small town North Wales was authentically portrayed and the other characters - Saffy's new friend Ceri and her father in particular- are a joy to read, honestly portrayed and entertaining. The oppression and depression of a Welsh winter, the drabness of a seaside town off-season are beautifully contrasted with descriptions of the beauty of the countryside in sunshine and snow.

This isn't a fast-paced drama. The histories of the characters come out slowly, the reader discovering things along with Saffy, Rain and Joe. This works well for the most part, but was a little frustrating at times.

The characters are, for the most part, easy to sympathise with. Rain is lovely, kind and caring if a little OTT at times, but her love for her daughter is clear. Joe too, while mysterious, is genuine and honest, and you know that whatever has happened in the past, there must be a good reason for it! Saffy, however, left me feeling conflicted. She seems very selfish, and is quite horrible to her lovely mum. This would be more understandable if Saffy was a teenager, but she is in her twenties and is studying to be a doctor. The stroppy, selfish, tantrum-throwing side of her character doesn't seem to fit and I wondered why it didn't put Joe off. I also feel that the back stories aren't developed enough. I don't want to give too much away but Joe's issues are dealt with a little too neatly and conveniently for me. This aspect of the plot could have been given more depth and detail.

The writing is solid, however, and it's a well-crafted and enjoyable read.

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### **Tara says**

Londoner Saffron De Lacy drops out of medical school to join her mother, Rain, in a Welsh coastal town. After a bumpy start, an unlikely romance blooms with fellow outsider Joe Jones – forcing each to face their secrets, and overcome the past.

Saffron is edgy and brittle, with a barely-concealed vulnerability. As the title (named after a Bob Marley song) suggests, 'Redemption Song' is about grief, guilt and the different ways in which we learn to forgive ourselves – and others.

A modern romance with real heart, and its feet firmly on the ground, 'Redemption Song' also explores

problems of loss and mortality. Laura Wilkinson's prose is typically direct and unshowy, achieving a transformative beauty when loneliness turns to love.

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### **Judith Barrow says**

I liked *Redemption Song*; as the blurb says it's a captivating novel. Laura Wilkinson has an even, straightforward writing style that actually disguises the difficulty in keeping together what is a complex story. On the whole the plot runs smoothly, giving equal balance to the tension and the everyday lives of the characters.

The characters of the two protagonists, Saffron and Joe are well written and rounded; it's easy to empathise with each of them and to follow their progress, both individually and in the way their relationship grows. I liked the descriptions of their appearance; they way they looked, the clothes worn, deftly and subtly inserted without a heavy handed 'dumping' of detail. The other characters that provide a background to the story: Rain, Saffron's mother, Eifion and Ceri are also well defined and add a sub-plot that weaves deftly through the main plot.

The dialogue is realistic, although sometimes the internal dialogue felt too much like the spoken dialogue and less like a stream of consciousness. Saying that, I was able to tell who was speaking all the way through the book; the author gave each character an individual, distinctive voice.

The descriptions of the various settings: the church, the seaside town of Coed Mawr, the pier, are well written and convincing; I think it worth mentioning that there are some beautiful descriptions of Coed Mawr. I found it easy to imagine the characters moving around in each scene

There are only two reasons I didn't give *Redemption Song* five stars and the first is a personal one; I became irritated by the drawn out mystery of Joe's background, the constant mention of his need for revenge and the flatness of the characters, Simon and Freddie. I realised they were friends from Joe's school-days but they didn't come alive for me in the way I thought they should have when I discovered their importance to the story. The other reason was I wasn't quite convinced by the character of Allegra but I'm not sure why. Perhaps it was because I felt she was portrayed as a one-sided character, maybe it was because, as a reader I learned something of her earlier in the book but wasn't sure exactly why she was part of the story.

Anyway, this didn't detract from my enjoyment of the story as a whole. I loved Laura Wilkinson's writing style and look forward to reading more from this author in the future. I would definitely recommend *Redemption Song*

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### **Jo Barton says**

After a catastrophic event, Saffron retreats to the peaceful Welsh town of Coed Mawr. There she learns to shield herself from further hurt and in doing so, the impenetrable barrier which surrounds her seems insurmountable. Living with her mother, Rain, is never going to be easy, as both women have sorrows which they would rather not explore. There is much to understand between mother and daughter, made all the more complex by Rain's role as the local Baptist minister and by the secrets which exist between them. And then into the mix comes Joe, a man with enough secrets of his own, a loner, who starts to take an interest in

Saffron, which then opens up a whole different web of intrigue.

After an initial slow start, the novel gradually expands into a perceptive look at the minutiae of lives irretrievably damaged by circumstances. The story is well controlled and the characters, whilst not always likeable, have a realistic edge to them which helps to carry the story along. I think that the author has done a fine job in looking at what makes people act in the way they do. The ambiguity of all of their lives is well explored, and there are some interesting turn of events, which help to maintain interest throughout the story.

So, all in all, I found this to be a good read, with a character driven plot and more than enough twists and turns to keep me guessing until the end.

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### **Tracy Terry says**

A bit of a slow burner to begin with but, oh my goodness so, so well worth sticking with.

Quite different from the author's first book, *Public Battles, Private Wars*, but once again we are treat to some of the most wonderful female characters in mother, Rain, her daughter, Saffron, and Saffron's friend Ceri.

Told from the point of view of mother and daughter and carpenter Joe. Whilst I can find myself struggling with novels told from multiple points of views I had no such difficulties here. Seamlessly narrated with each character given their own very distinct voice. Like the roses on the cover, just as the story slowly unfurled so they bloomed, their secrets revealed (Joe's perhaps a tad too slowly), their inner feelings laid bare.

Labelled by some as a romance. Yes, there are certain romantic attachments formed but thankfully no so-called 'insta-love' connections. Like the plot itself, carefully considered, *Redemption Song* is more about the relationships in general. Baptist minister Rain's and non-believer Saffron's in particular lending a wonderfully compelling air to the story.

Ultimately a story of healing, of finding forgiveness, both self forgiveness and otherwise. Though only her second novel author Laura Wilkinson is already a firm favourite of mine.

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### **Anne says**

Saffron is a twenty-five year old woman who has lost her way. She was involved in a car accident that changed her life and that of her closest family. Saffron abandoned her studies in medicine and retreated from London to the quiet town of Coed Mawr in Wales, to stay with her mother Rain. Saffron couldn't cope in London, but she hates this small town almost as much. Her mother is the local minister, the manse that is their home is constantly busy, everyone knows her business.

Although Saffron has suffered a massive loss, she doesn't appear to be heartbroken, she comes across as cross and angry and moody. Rain tries her best; coaxing her with delicate foods, involving her in the busy

Church activities, but their relationship is strained. Rain herself, recently widowed, still young, in her forties, is also something of an enigma. Privately she seems annoyed with everyone; with herself, with Saffron and especially with Joe - mysterious Joe, the carpenter who lives alone in a sparsely furnished cottage and has no history, and appears to be falling for Saffron.

Laura Wilkinson's characters are all a little bit broken. Rain and Saffron tiptoe around each other, never speaking about their losses, just getting angrier and angrier. Joe holds a lot back, nobody knows his address, or his mobile number, yet he receives calls from a guy called Simon who seems to know everything about him.

Slowly and surely, the secrets are revealed. The reader starts to understand Saffron, but Joe remains a mystery until almost the final page of the book. At times I wanted to shake all of them, to shout at them and tell them to sort themselves out and just talk to each other, but this author is very clever, and I suspect that is what she intended. As well as the three main players in *Redemption Song*, we are introduced to an cast of eclectic characters who will warm the heart of the reader. There's Ceri; badly dressed, coarse, likes a pint, but as loyal as the most faithful Spaniel dog, she lives with her father Eifion who I was more than a little in love with, and there's Mair, and the labourers from the building site and the lady who owns the tea room, all of them combine to make a really heart warming story.

With themes of loss and betrayal, and resentment and hidden bitterness that develop into trust and love and loyalty, *Redemption Song* is an engaging, character led story.

<http://randomthingsthroughmyletterbox...>

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