



Reaching Higher

Ann Somerville

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Second chances are one in a million.

Encounters, Book 2

Kine Raelne and his crew came to Quarn on a desperate, illegal mission to try to save his home planet. Captured and condemned to death for their crime, he and two other mission survivors are offered a chance to redeem themselves and to go home, if they're lucky. But it means working with a bunch of Quarnians who have every reason to distrust them.

Suaj qel Gwan knows what it's like to be the outsider, and he has more cause than most to hate Raelne and his kind for what they did. Suaj's telepathic ability might mean he has to work with the offworlders, but it doesn't mean he has to like it.

As they learn to work together to achieve their goals, Raelne and Suaj find within each other a reason to reach beyond their ingrained prejudice. But there are others who would use their fragile trust to achieve their own ends "

Reaching Higher Details

Date : Published January 6th 2009 by Samhain Publishing (first published January 2009)

ISBN : 9781605043531

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Format : ebook 0 pages

Genre : Romance, M M Romance, Science Fiction, Fantasy, Lgbt, Gay

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From Reader Review Reaching Higher for online ebook

Ayanna says

His name is "Kine." *Kine*.

His mother must have hated him to so clearly delineate him as prey. Unless he's actually a predator and this is supposed to be one of those stupid "ironic" statements?

...although he's called Rael most of the time. ...wait. What? I hadn't looked back at this and spent most of it thinking his name was Raelne Kine, but apparently it's the other way around...?

So, I did like this. It's very well-nuanced in characterization and world-building, and the MCs (1) don't immediately fall all over each other (2) don't start off on the friendliest terms but also don't have a kitschy getting-together. There were annoying miscommunications, but I was able to weather through it, so nothing glaringly idiotic (either on the characters' parts or the author's for writing it).

The only thing that really annoys me is the way it resolves. It resolves on a cliff-hanger, but the third book is out and from reviews, it seems to resolve the plot point Somerville left hanging.

But because it ended on that major plot-point cliff-hanger, I didn't enjoy the "winding down" of their relationship that was supposed to give me enough closure to be satisfied the book ended. It made the ending seem gimmicky to me.

Jeanne 'Divinae' says

Sauji.

In book two, you follow Kine. Kine is one of the invaders whom where kidnapping the babies from book one. He is now stuck on this other world and has decided to accept his fate. He expects to be killed, rightfully so, for kidnapping the Angel babies and being part of the killing of some of the Angels. You find out that Kine did not intend to kill any of the Angels. He and his crew where simply ignorant about Angels. The government finally gives him a chance to help right his wrongs. If he accepts their offer, with his knowledge, he may be able to help the people on Quarn.

Sauji, is an outsider. He is one of the few humans who have more Angel DNA and has an apperance of a 'wild' Angel. He has the ability to communate telepathically and speaking out loud. At first he hates the invaders, but as he learns more about Kine, he realizes that Kine really a bad person. Just a person who was naive and was trying to help his people. Kine, who is kind hearted, trys his best to help his fellow crew memebers and the people Quarn.

Then comes the opportunity that he may be able to go home. If he and his fellow crew member is able to fix their spaceship, they will be able to fly home, after helping the government. His other crew memeber, is kinda a stuck up snob who is a jerk.

As the time draws nearer, he starts to fall for Sauji and starts to see Quarn as his real home. Kine and Sauji have many obstacles to overcome in there flowering relationship. Kine finds out that not everyone is as noble

or trustworthy and learns of betrayal.

Stephanie says

I didn't think I'd like this one at first since it centered on the one of the criminals from the first book, but after the first few chapters I found I enjoyed it even more than *On Wings, Rising*. Not often do I prefer a sequel over what came before it. Rael and Suaj really endeared themselves to me.

Elisa Rolle says

In the previous book the pair of lovers were in a way "naive": Dinun, even if adult in age, was still new to love; being gay in a farmer society where all that matter was how many children you can have, made him a different from his similar, and so it was quite easy for him to accept to share his life with Moon, a wild Angel, a breed of men with white fur and wings.

In this story there is another type of diversity, due to the "alien" nature of one of the main character. More, he is not only "alien", he is also the villain, one of the men that in the previous book tried to kidnap the Angels' babies to study their DNA. To Raelne is now given a chance: life imprisonment or cooperate with the government to retrieve the lost technology knowledge; in exchange of that cooperation, Raelne has a very slim possibility to repair the spaceship and return back home. Since Raelne has just realized that what they did is not exactly an honorable thing, he accepts and as interpreter and colleague he has Suaj. Suaj is an human like Dinun, a breed of men with mixed blood, human and angel together. But in Suaj the Angel DNA is more remarkable, and he is like them, with almost black skin, white fur and he would have also a pair of wings if they were not surgical removed as an infant.

The relationship between Raelne and Suaj is not easy at first; Suaj can't hide the fact that he is not very fond of Raelne's people and what they did. Even if he is not a wild Angel, he looks at them like his real people, and so, in a way, he takes upon himself their rage on Raelne. Raelne instead is fascinated by Suaj, I believe both as a potential lover (even if his interest is a bit fetish like) than as a friend, since Raelne has a very curious mind, and Suaj stimulates his desire of knowledge.

It's more a battle/meeting of mind than body; probably if there was not an intellectual interest, Raelne and Suaj would never come to have also a sex relationship, and the intellectual nature is what lead all their future encounters: neither of them will never arrive to let their heart take their decisions, the rationalism will always be first. Even if, in the end, if really faced to a choice, it's possible that for once...

Again there is still the fascination of a relationship between two very different men, not only in culture but also in shape. This time the difference is not so strong, Suaj lost most of his original physical traits, and maybe the author is a bit more reserved in describing him, helped also by the fact that Suaj is dressed (less details to give). Also the language barrier is no more a problem, and so the reader can concentrate more on the characters than on the setting: the two of them and their interaction is not so different from a "normal" one, they bicker like an all too normal couple, and also feign to despise what they really want.

Paul Jr. says

Book two in the Encounters Series, *Reaching Higher* is an excellent spin on a sequel...taking a minor villain character from "On Wings Rising" and showing his side of the coin. What's lovely about this is not only does this story take a villain and show us things are not always cut and dried when it comes to villainy in literature, but Somerville explores that character as he attempts to atone (while being a guarded prisoner) for his sins. As with the first story, there is subtle social commentary woven in as well as observations on discrimination, but all this is done with a light hand, never getting in the way of the story but augmenting it. The result is a wonderfully full, rich world peopled by very real human beings...of every type.

You don't need to have read the first novella, but it helps. Highly recommended.

Ambre says

The whole premise of this one kind of fails. From the start, the MC is not particularly likeable, but the author tries to rehabilitate him by making him passive and sympathetic.

The story is about people stranded on an alien planet, sentenced to death for murder. However, since they have technological information the planet needs, suddenly they are negotiating from a strength position. But there's no acknowledgement that the Quarnians (the planet's inhabitants) have any negotiating power at all. One moment they are all in prison for murder, the next moment even the guy who refused to negotiate is being treated like a pampered guest and the MCs can ask for whatever they want and get it.

It kind of reminded me of an argument between a teenager and a really passive parent. The kid wants an allowance of \$15/week, the parent offers \$10, and the kid ends up with \$100.

The characters are not particularly complex and are very similar to those in her other books. The writing in this also seemed weaker in general. Her efforts to paint sympathetic characters oversimplify conflicts and relationships between characters. Just not Anne Somerville's best work.

Nicole says

I was determined to hate Raelne (how the heck do you pronounce that name?), but I was amazed at how quickly I became fond of him. I liked the slow build to Rael and Suaj's relationship. I love that I never know where the author is heading either... She keeps me guessing (which fucks with my control issues, just quietly).

Onto the next one!

