



Rocky Mountain Refuge

Nicky James

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Run! Hide! We are watching you, Huxley!

Huxley Dempsy suffers from a paranoid personality disorder. After a horrific tragedy five years ago, Huxley is convinced people are out to get him. Taking refuge in the foothills of the Canadian Rockies, he is a prisoner to his own mind. If he can think it up, it must be true, and there is no convincing him otherwise.

Wildlife biologist, Aspen Taylor, is on his way north again to close up the final year of the Grizzly Bear Research Project. Studying wildlife in their natural habitat is what sings to his soul. However, who he finds in the mountains is almost as beastly as the bears he studies.

An underlying sense of familiarity draws Aspen to learn more about this Wildman, and a strong sense of attraction binds them together almost instantly. But can Aspen break through the barriers of Huxley's mind and convince him to go home?

Rocky Mountain Refuge Details

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From Reader Review Rocky Mountain Refuge for online ebook

Jan says

****4.5 Stars ****

Have you ever stopped to think, what it means to be paranoid, as in suffering from a paranoid personality disorder? Because I never did. And the fact that in the past I have tossed around the sentence “you are paranoid” lightly to someone, now made me cringe.

Huxley suffers from a paranoid personality disorder. After a horrific tragedy in his life, it worsened, and he became a recluse living in a cabin in the middle of nowhere.

Aspen Taylor is a wildlife biologist on the way to the mountains to finalize a project/research on Grizzly Bear that he started a few years ago.

There, Aspen finds Huxley, living alone with his madness. As I got to know Huxley I started to realize how carelessly I used the word “paranoid”. It’s simply heartbreakingly.

Huxley is living alone for 5 years, in fear, hiding from imaginary enemies, he twists everything in his mind. It’s astonishing to get inside of his head, I saw no light at the end of the tunnel, many times for him. It was nerve-racking. How would the author pan this out?? Huxley’s situation was so bad. He lost the plot. It was as if he was living on another frequency.

As the MCs started to interact and the attraction between them grew, I got even more stressed out. Because seriously? How would this relationship work? How would Aspen convince Huxley to get his life back? How would Aspen convince him to look for professional help? How would he convince him he was not his enemy? How? How? How?

But Aspen did it. Somehow Aspen got through him from almost the start. I felt that Aspen’s presence worked as a link to connect Huxley to reality or to bring him back to reality because let me tell ya, Huxley was totally out of his mind, the distrust element constantly ghosting around, haunting him by imaginary enemies. It was not easy but Aspen managed to ground Huxley.

"What I knew for certain, was our shared love would carry us far."

This was an incredible ride. Insightful, heartbreakingly moving and so bloody hot. Seriously, two hot guys manhandling each other in the best way *cough* what’s not to like?

This beauty is available on KU.

Jennifer?Pher? says

Color me surprised, again. I just didn't think books with mental illness would appeal to me as much as they do.

That sounds kind of rude. Hopefully you know what I mean. I of course don't *want* there to be mental illness so I can read about it...anyway...

I normally seem to lean toward easy breezy or you know, paranormal but this is the second book by this author with this type of subject matter and it worked for me.

I didn't love this one as much as I loved *Love Me Whole* but it was pretty close. There was just something a little different to this one. I don't know if it didn't feel as authentic to me or maybe I didn't connect as much. That is a scary thought. Anyway...

I have my eye on this author. I think some of her other books may be a little too far out of my comfort zone but I keep going back to look. She is that good.

Sanaa ? Sanaa's Book Blog ? says

4-4.25 stars.

Rocky Mountain Refuge wasn't the easiest read but it was super different and that is exactly what I need every once in a while. Sometimes, I read a book that opens my eyes to the struggle of what people go through with illnesses and this book is one of them.

This was heartbreakingly amazing. It deals with an MC who has paranoid personality disorder and it took me into a journey of what it feels like to live with that. And how it affects the people you love most.

I'm glad Huxley got his happy ending with Aspen. They both completely deserved it.

Not everything in life is easy, you know. It's the people who risk facing the hard stuff and the scary stuff every day who come out stronger in the end.

Ariana says

* 5 stars +++*

This went straight on my 'best of the best' shelf.

I've had a lucky streak of really good books recently, but this ... totally blew me away.

Can I express how much I LOVED this?

First there are the MCs:

Huxley: Wow.

What a brilliant character. Huxley lives in a slightly different world from us - because he has paranoid personality disorder. This means that he trusts NOBODY, that he sees intrigue and people out 'to get him' in every corner, that he accuses people he loves of things that are not real.

Being in his mind was exhausting, to put it mildly. Going through the anguish and fear and worry he is dealing with all the time made ME feel anxious. The author must have done a hell of lot of research to describe the inner workings of Huxley's mind. What she has done here is brilliant and completely engrossing.

Aspen: the most patient, most tolerant, most sensitive guy ever!! And all that whilst staying totally real and human, being allowed to act 'normally'.

I admit happily I could not have done what he manages to do. Huxley is EXHAUSTING. or to say it better, his mind is exhausting. And Aspen gets very FRUSTRATED at times, which is not exactly surprising. The thing is - the connection between these guys is sizzling. At the bottom of their heart they have a lot in common, but still - how do you live with a person who sees and assumes conspiracy all the time?

The journey how they find their way to be together is one of the most awesome, realistic and beautiful stories I've read.

Nicky James deals with every aspect of their relationship in such a real way, it was book heaven in paradise. Darn.

And it is really really hot. Just saying -these are outdoors guys, both of them. Huxley just gave me the shivers he is so intense, and Aspen is simply swoon-worthy.

Have I gushed enough?
Highly recommended.

P.S. Please read it. (It is on ku! But I might have to buy it because I think I have to own this one)

Christelle says

4.5 stars

Saying that I was engrossed in this book is an understatement.

This story is focused on the building of the relationship between Aspen and Huxley.

Ariana, I couldn't help "stealing" your pics : they were with me the whole time I read this

Aspen is a wildlife biologist who enjoys the quiet outdoors. While wandering in the Canadian woods during one of his projects, he stumbles on Huxley, high on fever, and helps him to get back to his cabin.

Huxley became a recluse after the murder of his husband, afraid "*they*" will come after him, this fear nursed by a paranoid personality disorder. But he had no choice letting Aspen into his life.

Starts a slow dance, Aspen balancing between understanding and frustration and Huxley torn between his colored reality and the realization he needs to reach out.

The ride is not easy and I could feel the exhaustion, the struggles, the uncertainties, but also the determination from both MCs. My only niggle was that I couldn't feel the chemistry between Aspen and Huxley : despite some very hot moments, it looked more like a friendship for me.

It didn't stop me, though, to be completely immersed in this story and hugely moved by Huxley and Aspen. Recommended !

Note for Vir : Querida vir, muchas gracias por este regalo: una historia conmovedora que no olvidaré <3

Jewel says

4.5 Stars

~◊~Doxni(ela) ♥ ?? love & semi-colons~◊~ says

This story will gut you. It doesn't skirt around the issues of mental illness and loving someone who's mentally ill (yet so much more than their illness).

Huxley suffers from paranoid personality disorder (PPD), and it affects him exactly the way it sounds: He's suspicious of everyone; thinks everyone is out to get him; worries incessantly about imaginary threats and risks; and sees danger where none exists.

Huxley disappeared into the wilderness five years prior following his husband's brutal murder, and the longer he's been away from therapy, medication, and the calming influence of his husband (now deceased) and mom, the more restless and hostile he's become. When Huxley spots Aspen at the grocery store, he's convinced Aspen has come to hunt him down.

But Aspen is no spy. He doesn't work for "them." He's a wildlife biologist, close to turning 40, working on a grizzly research project. Aspen is drawn to Huxley, and when in a moment of epiphany he recognizes Huxley's face, he can't stop worrying. . . or caring.

This book is told from both men's POV, and this was done brilliantly. I never had any doubt as to who was narrating. I barely glanced at the names introducing each chapter.

Huxley's mind is an exhausting place to be. His brain never shuts down and always stays on high alert. Everything screams DANGER! ATTACK! ESCAPE! I found myself becoming paranoid about the motives of the secondary characters.

Aspen's team of student researchers was well-sketched, especially Chris who flirted constantly, and Tiger, who talked way too much. I kept thinking someone was going to turn on Huxley. Did they have an ulterior motive? Spend a few pages with Huxley, and you'll question everything too.

This is a relationship-focused story, but it is one intense ride. I couldn't put this book down, and even though it's long, it didn't FEEL long.

There is nothing easy about being in a relationship with Huxley. He perceives slights where none are intended, is quick to anger, and accuses Aspen of cheating on him based on no evidence whatsoever.

Even as I was frustrated with Aspen for not being supportive or understanding enough, I was aware of my own hypocrisy, as I'm not a patient person and no way could I have put up with Huxley's behavior.

And yet I ADORED Huxley. He really was much more than his illness. He could be so sweet and loving, and was an absolute god in bed (and anywhere else lust struck).

This would be a good time to mention that this is an incredibly sexy book. *fans self* Huxley loves to be in control, and Aspen discovers that he likes a little pain (and more than a little bossiness). The sex is raw and real, and the men's connection feels explosive and true.

Huxley learns to trust Aspen completely, and Aspen realizes that for the relationship to work, he needs to manage his reactions to Huxley's illness as much as Huxley must be willing to check facts first, which is enormously difficult for someone with PPD.

Huxley doesn't believe he's paranoid; he thinks his mind is more attuned to threats and danger and that he's more observant than most people.

Think about it: How do you convince a person with PPD that he's paranoid without making him more paranoid?

Even though the HEA doesn't come easily, with angst and tears along the path to happiness, it does come. **I loved the ending; most people would shun the life Aspen and Huxley chose, but it was their salvation.**

***J* Too Many Books Too Little Time says**

DNF @ 40%

Just never could get in to this one, and didn't find myself wanting to go back to it.

Elsbeth says

~~ Not all people are out to get you, Huxley. Some people just want to be nice. ~~

Another winner for me!! Amazing writing. Loved the character development of the two main characters Huxely and Aspen.

One way or another but Nicky James's stories always slay me. They are so real. Knowing absolutely nothing about the mental disorder "paranoid personality disorder"(PPD). My heart broke for Huxely. I can't imagine living your life questioning EVERYTHING, trusting NO ONE. It must be exhausting....

And the people involved, I have so much respect for them. I felt so much for Aspen. Aspen was trying so hard to support Huxely but he needed support too, to be able to handle Huxely's behaviour/way of thinking. I loved how Nathaniel, Huxley's late husband addressed it as; *"We can't all have a mind like yours, babe. Gotta help me keep up."*

Also I have to mention Chris. Chris was such a surprise. All summer he had been flirting outrageously with Aspen but what he said to Aspen was such an eyeopener, I loved that.

"Mental health isn't a joke. It's really fucking real, and if people spent more time trying to understand it than shunning those who suffer, then maybe people like my brother (who had Bi-Polar) wouldn't have felt so trapped and alone in this world."

Uuuugh and the epilogue!!! Such a perfect and extremely deserved HEA for Huxley and Aspen!!!
#swoons

I love these books that keep you thinking after you finished. I reckon I've hit another bookslump because of it.

HIGHLY RECOMMENDED

Cristina says

Rocky Mountain Refuge by Nicky James is an intense and emotional journey through the complex and unpredictable mind of a character suffering from intense anxiety and paranoia.

Huxley Dempsey runs away from the city after the tragic death of his husband and finds refuge in an abandoned cabin in the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. Living in fear of being found by his 'enemies', he conducts a solitary existence on the limits of survival.

Aspen Taylor is a wildlife biologist who's conducting a research project on grizzly bears in the same area when he unexpectedly gets to know Huxley.

The encounter and tentative friendship between Aspen and Huxley are marred by the latter's tendency to distrust and misinterpret people and situations and, despite growing steadily, their relationship is never depicted in easy or smooth terms by the author.

Huxley's mind constantly bends kind gestures, simple utterances and honest smiles into life-threatening situations. His reactive attitude frequently turns to aggression and preventive defence and Aspen is often caught in the middle of confusing tirades, hostile behaviours and unfounded accusations.

The fact that attraction, chemistry and then love don't smooth things out for the MCs is a commendable trait in the novel and I've appreciated how Nicky James portrayed her two characters as human and flawed. Huxley is unwell and in need of urgent help - although he refuses to admit it - and Aspen is not always the willing knight in shining armour who will magically heal Huxley with the power and steadfastness of his love.

(view spoiler)

The rugged and beautiful Rocky mountains provide the majestic backdrop for much of their story. From the hot, beautiful summers to the wonderfully raw winters, nature and its silences seem to give respite and calm to Huxley's overactive mind and Aspen's doubtful and cautious approach.

And in a way, it will be their love of nature and the outdoors to help them build and cross some fundamental bridges in their relationship.

I've really enjoyed this novel. It was moving, raw and quietly powerful and I'm very curious to read more by this author.

♥Sharon♥ says

You were probably expecting a sexy picture of Huxley right? Well you got one of Grizzly bears instead. Cute buggers aren't they but I sure as hell wouldn't want to run into one of these on a hike in the mountains. :)

Rocky Mountain Refuge is what I'd call a little gem. Something unexpected and a story I found to be beautiful. Huxley really touched my heart. After experiencing a heartbreak loss, he lost control of his ability to deal with his paranoid personality disorder. For 5 years he led a lonely and desolate life that he

seemed content with. That was until Aspen. I loved this guy too.

This story takes you through Huxley and Aspen's shot at happiness. It was a journey that was heartbreakingly real at times but also incredibly comforting. Their relationship was fragile and the author did a fantastic job at keeping things real. And the sex. HOLY SHIT.

The side characters were great too. It was kind of fun being out in the wilderness. ❤

Elena says

[very mild BDSM during sex scenes. It probably won't register for most people as even remotely BDSM, it didn't for me, but I know some people don't like being blindsided by this sort of things, so: it's mostly one MCs calling the shots and the other going along with it during sex scenes and later one MC binds the other's wrists. (hide spoiler)]

Teri says

[While rough I appreciated those moments w

Lost in a Book says

4.75 Stars

YASSSS!!!

I devoured this insanely fast. *Rocky Mountain Refuge* left me hungover and scouring lists and recommendations for rustic and/or wilderness M/M reads. Not gonna lie though, this book hurt. It's hard to read Huxley's POV and my face might have leaked a tiny bit. However, it's balanced with a lightness that surrounds Aspen and that makes it hurt SO good.

Huxley has struggled with paranoia since childhood. Between therapy and the amazing support system of his mom and husband Nathaniel, he was able to function throughout his day to day life. That is, until he witnessed the murder of his husband and then his paranoia got the better of him and he now lives secluded in the wilderness for fear of being found by the men who committed the crime. From the beginning of the story, Huxley's paranoia is suffocating. It's debilitating, full of delusional thoughts, and complete rationalization of maintaining his current lifestyle cutoff from the outside world.

Aspen is a wildlife biologist that's working on a grizzly bear project in the middle of nowhere with only his team around... and unbeknownst to him, Huxley. He has such a calm nature and is totally at ease in the

wilderness. He stumbles upon Huxley and that encounter and many that follow have Aspen approaching Huxley as if he's a wild animal. Aspen is intrigued by Huxley and can't help himself from creeping around his cabin.

Their relationship begins as a way to release the pent up sexual frustration and loneliness. Huxley can only give Aspen one thing and that's an orgasm. Their smexy times are hot AF. For real. Huxley is all growly and bossy and hot and strong and huge and...

Anywhoo, Aspen is more than willing to keep coming back for those times and senses the need to go slow with a friendship and then hopefully more. The more time Aspen spends with Huxley, the clearer the paranoia becomes. Day by day, their relationship forms as they try to develop a new *normal* and hopefully get Huxley the help he needs while not scaring him away. Huxley's mental illness isn't sugar coated. It's not swept under the rug and a magic penis doesn't come to fix all his woes. Shit got *real* and their HEA is not easily earned but is definitely sweeter in the end.

Let's talk about Nathaniel, the murdered husband. I know this book isn't about their relationship and the story starts after the murder. BUT, the writing and portrayal of love between Nathaniel and Huxley is absolutely beautiful. Nothing is diminished and it really added more feels to the heartbreak of what Huxley survived. I've read many romances where the partner passes away and for some reason the living MC says "best I ever had" or "way better than before." The author didn't do that here and it was absolutely refreshing to know that two people shared an amazing love that tragically didn't last and they move on. Instead of breaking down that prior relationship to prop up the current one, it's kept on a loving pedestal and only adds to the foundation of the new one.

hops off soapbox

I really, really, really enjoyed this book and hope we see more from Huxley and Aspen in the future. Definitely recommended.

P.S. Just a note of *warning*, this book takes place in the wilderness and *wilderness things* take place such as skinning/killing animals for survival. *Mental illness* is also prevalent throughout.

Debra says

2.5 stars

I'm obviously in a super-minority with this review but the book frustrated me. It had all the makings of what should have been a story that checks so many of my boxes, but I found it difficult to stay engaged.

It started off well for me, but then dragged in the middle a bit. Huxley was a fascinating character and I really wanted to see how he would deal with things towards the end, so I forged on, but I found myself disliking Aspen more and more as I went on and a lot of things at the end felt sacrificed to time jumps with telling and not showing. There were also quite a bit of misused and misspelled words that became distracting after a while.

I liked Huxley and I sympathized with his situation. He has managed to carve out an existence for himself. Aspen was another story. He started out okay for me, but I soon found myself disliking him. Aspen meets Huxley and when he realizes who Huxley is, decides he's going to save Huxley, whether he wants it or not. Aspen seems to be understanding of Huxley's condition and seems to want to help. The two manage to carve out a sort of friendship with benefits for the time Aspen is going to be around, but Aspen is slowly setting the stage to try to get Huxley to agree to return home. Meanwhile, Huxley is slowly starting to trust that Aspen isn't out to get him. This all goes to pot when Aspen does an about-face at a crucial time for Huxley. That didn't sit well with me at all. Aspen continues to act childishly and at times cruelly; while I get that it's no picnic dealing with Huxley's illness, Aspen jerked him around quite a bit IMO and even when he atones for it, I didn't quite ever warm up to him.

Again, I know I'm in the minority here, but I didn't connect with the relationship between the men. I did appreciate that the author did not back down from Huxley's condition and didn't miraculously cure him. With so many highly rated books, I'll give the author another try, this was just a miss for me personally.
