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FIVE STAR™ EXPRESSIONS NEWS

Sanctuary Ranch

Junior Michael Ray & Corinne Joy Brown

\$26.95. ISBN: 1-59414-450-8

Barnes & Noble, February 24, 2006

Rating: ★★★★★

A fascinating character study. In Fairfield, New Jersey, Nashville promoters Mike Foxworthy and Mart Heistler think that with some polish singer Amelia "Tawny" Talbott can be their ticket back to the big time. Broke and at the end of her rope Tawny and her manager Terry Ann Hill agree to her being turned into the "Daughter of the American West". Their old army buddy Jess McLain owes Mike a favor so the former rodeo star and local musician agrees to house Tawny on his J Bar M Ranch in Wyoming though he would prefer to say no. He knows he needs the money if Mike's instincts prove correct and his ranch is to survive. When Tawny arrives, he hears her talent when she sings, but also knows she will fail because she is an alcoholic. Pushing her beyond her limit as if she was a new military recruit she cleans up but shocks him when she encourages him to be all that he can be by going back on the rodeo circuit even as they fall in love. SANCTUARY RANCH is a fascinating character study starring two individuals who seemingly on the surface have nothing in common, but quickly realize they share plenty as each encourages the other to conquer their demons that hold them back. The support cast is solid adding to the feel of modern day life on a Wyoming ranch or the behind the scenes manipulation in the Nashville music world. However, this contemporary is the story of two people meeting with each bringing out the best in the other. - *Harriet Klausner*

Booklist, April 1, 2006 issue

Amy is a pretty gal with a golden voice and dreams of country-music stardom, but she's also a drunk and a runaway, and has a foul mouth and a quick temper. Jess McLain is a former rodeo star who could have achieved what Amy so desperately wants, but he walked away from fame to buy and work his own horse-breeding ranch. When he gets a call from a producer who's also a friend, Jess reluctantly agrees to take Amy in hand and teach her what being a cowboy really means, sober her up, and get her ready to perform. And as a decorated Army Ranger, he's tough enough to see the job through. Ray and Brown's debut coauthored contemporary romance is an incredible tale of patriotism, dreams failed and realized, and commitment to goals in the face of adversity, but it's primarily a wonderful insider take on the realities of life in the American West by authors who skillfully demonstrate that they really know their stuff. - *Lynne Welch*

Romance Reviews, April 10, 2006.

Jane Bowers, www.romrevtoday.com

Amy Talbot's dream of becoming a country-western star is derailed by her use of alcohol and her lack of "seasoning." Amy has a pure voice, but her promoters are looking for an edge in her sound, as well as a country look. Where could a better place be to accomplish this than at J-Bar-M Ranch in the middle of Wyoming? So what if she's not welcome with open arms and must prove herself as a ranch hand? Slowly she succeeds in her quest, despite the surly attitude of the ranch owner.

Jess McLain, once a rodeo star and musician, bought the ranch as a place of refuge after an accident ended his career. He's noted for taking on stragglers in need of a place to save their souls and to get on their feet; Amy is no exception. He really doesn't want her on J-Bar-M Ranch, but her handlers force his hand until she is nearly on his doorstep. Does he work her harder because of his feelings? As he watches her become a capable ranch hand, she soon becomes someone he begins to care for more than just an employee.

SANCTUARY RANCH is filled with emotion and the coming of age of not only Amy, but Jess also. A motley crew resides on the ranch, and they are as different as night is to day. Amy is sullen and doesn't want to be here at first, but she's willing to do what it takes to be a country-western star. Jess may be the boss, but he withholds his true inner feelings from others. He has seen death, despair and disappointment in his life, and the ranch is his salvation. He is assisted on the ranch by Larry, his lifelong friend, and Ashley, who is trying to fight her own demons.

Poignant scenes will give readers a look at the harsh life on a Wyoming ranch during the cold, dark days of winter. It isn't a pretty life by any stretch of the imagination, but it's a life which makes a person stronger. The romance between Jess and Amy is sweet and slow to build and is more of a friendship. Trust plays an important part of SANCTUARY RANCH, as one must trust in order to survive.

Filled with heart-stopping action which revolves around the lives of Amy, Jess, and other inhabitants of the J-Bar-M Ranch, SANCTUARY RANCH tells of hope and rising from the ashes. Readers looking for an interesting tale set in the real West won't go wrong with SANCTUARY RANCH.

- *Patti Fischer, Romance Reviews Today*

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