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The Last Woman Standing: A Novel



Synopsis

Two decades after the Civil War, Josephine Marcus, the teenage daughter of Jewish immigrants, is lured west with the promise of marriage to Johnny Behan, one of Arizona's famous lawmen. She leaves her San Francisco home to join Behan in Tombstone, Arizona, a magnet for miners (and outlaws) attracted by the silver boom. Though united by the glint of metal, Tombstone is plagued by divided loyalties: between Confederates and Unionists, Lincoln Republicans and Democrats. But when the silver-tongued Behan proves unreliable, it is legendary frontiersman Wyatt Earp who emerges as Josephine's match. As the couple's romance sparks, Behan's jealousy ignites a rivalry destined for the history books. At once an epic account of an improbable romance and a retelling of an iconic American tale, *The Last Woman Standing* recalls the famed gunfight at the O.K. Corral through the eyes of a spunky heroine who sought her happy ending in a lawless outpost with a fierce will and an unflagging spirit.

Book Information

File Size: 2642 KB

Print Length: 300 pages

Publisher: Lake Union Publishing (July 1, 2016)

Publication Date: July 1, 2016

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B017RBIZII

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #2,195 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #8 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Literature & Fiction > Literary Fiction > Biographical #10 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Literature & Fiction > Genre Fiction > Biographical #11 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > Biographical

Customer Reviews

First, I actually read this book from beginning to end. I have not had much luck finding good Kindle

First books, especially after reading glorious write-ups from reviewers, who appear to me as not having read what they are writing about. At least I have read every page of this book and will try to give a realistic opinion. I would recommend that before you consider this book, google Josephine Earp and read the Wikipedia article about her and other books written about her. It is hard to separate fact from fiction, especially since Josephine herself worked hard at maintaining a fictional history, hiding her not-so-stellar past for her entire life, even suing those who might make a movie or write a book about what she really was. Having a little background from a google search will help you understand the characters. Based on research, Josephine Sarah Marcus Earp aka Sadie Mansfield left San Francisco in December, 1874, at the age of 14 for Prescott Arizona where she was a "sporting lady" or prostitute. While there she met Yavapai County Sheriff, Johnny Behan. Johnny's wife filed for divorce in 1875 complaining that Behan "openly and notoriously visited houses of ill-fame and prostitution at said town of Prescott." After the divorce, "Sadie" becomes Behan's common-law wife. In 1881, she leaves Behan for the Deputy Sheriff in Tombstone, Wyatt Earp, whom she lived with for the rest of his life. However, in real life, Josephine, aka Sadie, spins the story that she did not come to Arizona until 1879, when she was 19. She vehemently hides her true past. It does not come as a surprise to me that the real Josephine lived her life with two well-known men in law enforcement. She definitely wanted to be viewed as a respectable woman, despite her original profession. Perhaps, she yearned for the respectability that society gives law enforcement to rub off onto herself through her association with men of the law. But who is the Josephine here? This book is told in the first person by Josephine Marcus. It is told as the real Josephine would want people to believe about herself, not about who she really was. It takes great skill for an author to tell a story in the first person and most of the time, it doesn't work. But I don't degrade this author because the book is advertised as historical fiction and the real Josephine was great at making up stories and passing them off as fact. So, it seems appropriate to read this from the first-person point of view. From a technical perspective, the writing is simple and it appears to be aimed at a reader who reads at a teen/young adult level. The writing is well done. But the first-person writing just sits there leaving the story flat, with no depth. So I would give the author a technical score of 4 to 4 1/2 stars for the quality of the voice of her writing. But not a 5 as there is no character development. Everyone seems so shallow and not well-rounded. No one has a complex personality. Generally, a book will grab you because of its great character development or its engaging plot. If there is no character development, that doesn't necessarily mean it is a bad book. You can have a great, suspenseful plot. Gong! Leave the stage. Failure! The plot just plods along. No excitement. No Suspense. It is just too sanitized. Josephine comes off as a very naïve,

innocent, young adult who happens to be a virgin, wants to stay a virgin until someone puts a ring on her finger. Yet, as innocent and naïve as she is presented, she left her Jewish parents in San Francisco to live with a man, Johnny Behan, who she doesn't really know, and won't marry her. Meanwhile, she finds herself attracted to another man, Wyatt Earp. The conflict within herself and between the two men could have been developed but No! The plot puts you to sleep. LITERALLY!!! I fell asleep and my Kindle slipped from my fingers and found itself on the floor. Come on! If you are going to fictionalize something, give it some oomph! The plot rates a 1. Not good. My overall rating is 3 because the author does write well but doesn't seem to be able to tell a story well. Overall, the book is OK. I have read a lot of FREE books better than this and a few paid books that were worse but my overall impression after reaching the last page is meh... Very forgettable. I believe I made a bad choice for my free monthly Kindle First as a Prime member. I hate to make a negative suggestion but I suggest that you look more closely at the other Kindle First picks before thinking about picking up this one.

The first chapter gripped me with the mood the author set, with this first line: "Tombstone kicked my ass and I kicked back." Josephine Marcus Earp tells her story as she visits her old town in 1937. "I was just a woman" a footnote "expected to tuck my skirts under my tail and inspire male bravery when I wasn't baking corn bread or childbearing." The narrator's feelings are deep and expressed in new ways, through the character of a young woman who decides to forsake her Jewish home for the love of a Tombstone lawman. Looking back at age 80, she sums up: "I know the juice and I drank it." What is her summation of all those men in her Tombstone days? They strut about and declare: "My balls are bigger than yours, my pistol shoots straighter, my horse faster, and my loving stronger. I'm old but I'm not dead yet." Gripping first chapter that set me up imaginatively to feel the history of real people. So I expected much of this book. Chapter Two and Three go back to 1880 in Josephine's San Francisco Jewish home. I found parts jarring as the author intrudes with allusions to later times. Having set up the narrator as a sympathetic and feisty character involved with the OK Corral gang, I'd prefer straight chronological storytelling as we go back to 1880 in the second chapter and on. I like historical fiction, especially westerns such as Louis L'Amour and Zane Grey brought us. But if a writer departs too much from the historical character, then for me the credibility of the novel suffers. Sure, an author can throw in a lot of true facts and settings, but the heroes have to align with what we know about them in history as likely true. Josephine is molded into a character too far removed from the

historical person she was. She is designed as a modern romance-novel heroine, swept off her feet by sexy and tough men, yet striving to keep her virginity until marriage. History tells us that wasn't the real Josephine Marcus. I'd take the editor's word at face value: this is a wildly entertaining fictional story. Yet, once I accepted this re-created character, she was fun, admirable, truly loving but confused, and had high standards. Through her eyes, we are offered a more emotional perspective of the famous lawmen and characters of Tombstone and the OK Corral gunfight. If you wish to know the true Josephine Marcus Earp, then I'd suggest the book by Ann Kirschner, *Lady at the O.K. Corral*. *Lady at the O.K. Corral: The True Story of Josephine Marcus Earp* This novel is my selection for this month's Kindle First, a benefit of my paid Prime membership.

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