



Latitude 38

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LATITUDE 38 is a cautionary tale of love, peril, and one woman's quest to die with dignity. Diego and Adriana Sanchez are deeply in love and their world is shattered when she is diagnosed with terminal cancer. They live south of the 38th where terminal patients are given only placebos to fight excruciating pain. Their sole option is to flee to the north where euthanasia is mercifully encouraged. LATITUDE 38 is the story of Diego and Adriana's enduring love and their courageous journey in search of dignity and humanity as a small group of "tourists" attempts to secretly cross the heavily guarded border in a cruel, dogmatic, and violent world.

THE AUTHOR

Ron Hutchison, a University of Missouri journalism graduate, began writing fiction full time at the age of 66 after a long career in journalism and public relations. LATITUDE 38 is his second novel.

Latitude 38 Details

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Mayra says

If you're looking for something different to read this summer, I highly recommend you grab a copy of Hutchison's controversial, adventure-filled novel, *Latitude 38*.

The novel takes place some time in the future. Because of political unrest and heated debates over issues like immigration, gay rights, euthanasia, gun control, capital punishment, school prayer, and same-sex marriage, the United States has been split into two republics along the 38th latitude. The southern republic is violent, dogmatic and corrupted, while the northern republic is more peaceful, flexible and compassionate.

Our protagonists, Diego and Adriana Sanchez, are a couple deeply in love. They live in the southern republic. However, this isn't their main problem: Adriana is dying of terminal cancer and the pain is getting unbearable, but one of the south's 'secret' policies is not to waste pain medication on terminally-ill patients. Euthanasia is also out of the question, as it is not permitted in the south. In order for Adriana to have a serene, pain-free death, they must find a way to get to the north.

Through Adriana's oncologist, they learn about Arnold Cutbirth, a roguish brute whose 'job' is to guide people across the border for exorbitant sums of money. Thus, Diego and Adriana use their life savings to pay for the trip. The story starts at the heart of the conflict, with Diego and Adriana meeting Cutbirth and getting ready for their journey. They soon find out that they're not the only ones in the group. Travelling with our protagonists is an interesting array of characters: a gay couple, a young mother and her ten-year old girl, and a religious zealot, among a few others. Together, propelled by their own individual goals and guided by cruel and merciless Cutbirth, they must endure all kinds of hardships and dangers in their quest for freedom and a better life.

Latitude 38 is skilfully plotted. From the beginning, Hutchison pulled me into the story with lots of action and dialogue. Exposition and description are kept at a minimum, so the pace is quick. The love between Diego and Adriana, as well as her sad situation are compelling without being melodramatic. Needless to say, they're very sympathetic characters and, because of this, it was gripping watching their behaviour and reactions as they were pushed to the limit due to their circumstances. Cutbirth is a fascinating character—in fact, for me he is the most fascinating character in the novel. He's a bad seed, but there's something about him that makes you wonder that, had he been born in the right setting under different circumstances, he would be a very different person. There's a subtle transformation in him as the story develops, and this was engrossing to watch. Also interesting is the dynamic interaction between all the different characters as they try to get along in spite of their own instinct to survive.

Though there's lots of adventure in *Latitude 38*, this isn't your typical adventure novel. It is a realistic story with elements of adventure and dystopia. It is a tale of survival filled with crisp dialogue, mounting tension and a heart-breaking climax. While some people might hate the ending and others might love it, one thing is for sure: few will be able to stay impartial or indifferent toward it. This is one of those stories that will stay with you long after having read it.

Bob says

I've been on a dystopian kick lately, and snagged this one from Pixel of Ink. Really enjoyed it. It's not a

happy story with rainbows and unicorns, but it's still a love story rolled into a suspense/thriller.

I liked the characters you're supposed to like, and didn't like the ones you weren't supposed to. I would have liked a little more development of a few people, like Henry, Sam, and Yong, but they weren't total cardboard cutouts.

A little more history for the readers would have been nice, but the characters knew why they were crossing the border, and we learned why as the story went on.

The cave scenes were great, as my family vacationed in that area last summer, at the Mermac Cavern. It really is almost oppressingly dark without a light source when you're underground.

Good story.

Duke Fnord says

Well written, ending left much to be desired.

The characters were well thought out and they interacted with each other in a believable series of conversations and actions. By the descriptions of the countryside and caves, it would seem that the author had taken the time visit the places that he wrote about. I was engaged and enjoying the story, and then it was as if he had just given up on it. I'm not sure if he ran out of time, got tired of writing it, or what, but the characters deserved better.

Betsy Talbot says

I liked this book for several reasons:

- * Always like it when a cast of characters is thrown together in a stressful situation - a human lab of sorts
- * It was political in nature, imagining a future if things as they are run amok
- * The characters came with both good and bad characteristics and the hero was flawed

Like several other reviewers, my main complaint with the book was not knowing the why of how things got that way in the US. It would have been helpful to have a little background to understand why all the characters wanted to leave, not just Adriana. It would have also helped to have a map drawing at the start to see how the country was divided to better envision the journey.

The writing was good, the characters interesting and well-developed, and there were a few surprises in there that kept me guessing. And I did not anticipate the way it ended, which I always like.

I hope Mr. Hutchison writes another book - I was intrigued to learn he didn't start writing until age 66!

Molly says

I found this book very engrossing, suspenseful, and well-written. It is not a feel-good tale though. Pretty gruesome, violent, and ultimately hopeless/depressing. Don't wait for a happy ending! It reminded me of

Hunger Games in overall tone and structure, but was more depressing.

I agree with other reviewers who have noted that you don't find out any more about what is happening politically than you read in the Amazon description (which gives you actually more info than the book itself about the domestic situation).

As a Missouri native, I enjoyed the element that Missouri is the line between the two halves of the nation and it is familiar Missouri topography that must be navigated on the characters' flight from the oppressive half of the divided US. The implication is that it split along political lines, with the conservatives holding one half and the secular/liberal side holding the other half. Since we never actually spend any time in the secular half, we never know if it is really doing as good as they hope it is, but the conservative half as it evolved in this tale is certainly not a state that I would ever want to live in!

Heather Taylor says

This book was awful awful awful. I kept reading because I wanted to find out what happened and the ending was the worse part. The whole book was about mostly awful people doing awful things to each other. A group of people were trying to escape a ultra conservative crazy society. It bothered me that if conservative morals were inforced life would be cruel and horrible. The language was awful and it was just depressing. Skip this book!

Linda says

It was...okay. The writing wasn't bad, the story kept my interest somewhat (I kept reading it to find out how it ended) but....the synopsis talked about the United States splitting into two separate republics but VERY little of that was mentioned in the book. Yes, we saw the overbearing police-state that was the south but why? Why did this happen? Why was the border closed? What caused the split? What was given in the synopsis on the Amazon website is pretty much all we ever learn about "the state of the nation." The story is pretty much only about a group of people trying to cross the border. We learn a why some of them are taking the risk to cross but don't learn everyone's story and even those stories we do learn don't go into much detail. So a group of people we don't know very well are risking everything to cross a border (which could be ANY border - Mexico/US, East Germany/West Germany, Chiina, etc.) for sketchy reasons. It could have done more; it could have been more. The writing was decent enough but the story needs week. Without the information and reasons as to what happened and how it came to be this way, why the people were going and what the "other side" is supposed to be like it's...just another story.

Ruth Pohl says

Was hoping for an ending that provided more substance and a glimpse of what people in the story were searching for.

Ann237 says

This book is one that keeps you praying never happens! But the scary thing is it is something that could become all to real in a world divided. In a sense we live with our own areas of latitude 38, with people using their personal feelings on matters to dictate how certain situations and people are treated. We have Drs. And medical establishments that treat those with a so called " better quality of life" than others. Who are they to decide because a person cannot walk or talk does not have a life or cannot be a productive part of society? We have places that still will shun upon same sex couples going to church to worship as if not worthy you get my drift... Great book... Eye opener!!!

Penny Post says

I liked this book set in a future that could happen to the USA if people don't come together. This is the story of a group of people thrown together in a flight to what they picture as their USA of the past. Where a tight control over their lives, non acceptance of homosexuality, terminally ill are given placebos, medical experimental treatments are not freely given and general life is very harsh. A better place, a place where you can live and die with freedom and dignity. Each of the characters have their reason to flea from South of Latitude 38, but the border is highly guarded and death could easily be in their future trying to cross. I love that Missouri is part of the journey and can picture quite clearly the terrain, bugs, heat and humidity. I was completely engrossed in the book. The main couple were very endearing, but the need for the individuals to congeal into a group working together while put into stressful and life altering situations kept me turning pages.

This is not a love story, but a story of fight or flight, live or die and the will to continue.

Mary says

I actually found this book to be very moving. I can easily see the US of today splitting along similar lines if enough people started caring about politics. The characters seemed fairly realistic, at least those that we got to know. They weren't all cliches. I enjoyed that you could see how the narrator's first impression of someone changed as he got to know them.

Yes, the ending was sad, but life is like that sometimes. This is not a book you want to read if you like happy rides off into the sunset. It will also make you think about some uncomfortable issues such as illegal immigration, right to die, and church-state separation. And if you're a fundamentalist or conservative, you probably won't like confronting these issues in this book.

Unlike other reviewers, I like how you got a somewhat narrow, personal perspective without a bunch of history and explanations. It's the view of a normal person, rather than the god-like perspective you get in some books. I'd like to see the author write more about this world, more slivers of life explored. I like the ugly realism of it all.

Needlefingers says

I was really intrigued by the premise; however, I thought it would be more involved with the aftermath of the country splitting. Instead, it has a fairly narrow focus on a group attempting to cross the border. You can get bits of ideas about what has happened to the country, but it is definitely more about the particular social

interaction of the group.

In regards to that, I felt the characters were not always genuine. Is an alpha-male really going to tolerate that many challenges to his authority? I don't believe so.

The end of the book did not leave me with any revelation or wisdom to take from it. So fair warning, it's not an uplifting read. I don't regret reading it, but I wouldn't read it again.

Paula says

North America has been split in half. We never know how this happened but this book is character driven about 8 people who want to be smuggled to the north for various reasons. The smuggler (for lack of a better word), charges \$40,000 per person and makes no promises. He is delivering a service and there is no money back guarantee in this dangerous journey.

I thought this was a well written book that kept me turning pages to see how it would turn out. We get the personalities of the characters and decide who we want to make it and who we don't. It is depressing and graphic in places, but if you pay attention to the news, this could be a reality in the future. Interesting book.

Tanya says

I'm not exactly sure why I purchased this book for my Kindle. I think it had to do with the dystopian elements. I liked the premise of the book and it was nice to read a book with this kind of plot that was not YA since I have read a lot of those recently. What kept the story going was the love Diego and Adriana had for each other. Diego was willing to do anything to help his wife's pain. The characters that they met on the way toward the USS of A were developed nicely. The plot worked for the most part. Like a lot of other readers, I was not all that happy with the ending. I am not the author though.

I think I would have liked to know more about the other side and why there was a division in the first place, but I can see why the author may have wanted to get right to the action. The action sequences were good.

MayMay says

Wish I could give it 3.5 stars. The writing was good, the characters had a certain amount of depth, it was certainly a page turner with little to no confusion.

BUT-yeah there's a but.....there's little to no world built here, no background, no explanation of why is the other side better and why is the country divided?

You are thrown into a depressing but suspenseful, you have to read it to believe it lol, journey with a group of people trying to cross "the border." You feel for these people but it's hard to connect with them because you only get little glimpses into the horror they are trying to scape from. The book would have been way more interesting if we would have gotten some history with it (besides the blurb). It would have made it more real, more gut wrenching, more gruesome and I would have felt more for the characters.

There definitely wasn't a happy ending which was fine with me..... but it would have liked one ray of hope

after the arduous journey.
