



A Promise Of Home

Wendy Vella

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When Branna O'Donnell heads back to Lake Howling, Oregon, she's not sure what to expect. It's a place that holds plenty of memories, both good and bad, but Branna is determined to find some peace there from the demons of her past. However, she soon realizes that living in a small town again comes with complications, and one of them is named Jake McBride.

Once the town golden boy, Dr. McBride has returned from Iraq angry and, like her, shouldering a few emotional scars. They strike sparks off each other from the outset, and Branna knows that if she gives in to the attraction between them it's going to result in a world of pain. The problem is she's not sure how to walk away.

A Promise Of Home Details

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From Reader Review A Promise Of Home for online ebook

Em says

Great start, but the rest of it was boring

Negar Arvanaghi says

Way to be anti-social. It's just a handshake.

Matchmaking, Penny?

Accident?

Eww, his mom talked about his chest! Yes, I'm mentally twelve.

Oh, he was an army doc, talk about pressure.

What just happened?

Someone loves his helicopter.

Please tell me her father never said it was her fault.

Bahaha, good one, Jake.

Something like that can really fast-track feelings.

Is this a book club or the mafia?

I know nothing about clinical depression or suicide.

Omigod, I love her dad. He made me cry.

Brian dies. That is all.

I'm so happy she says it back to him right away.

I received an ARC from Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

Gaufre says

The characters are really likable, the story is sweet, and the writing decent. So why the low rating? There are too many repetitions of the characters' emotions and hesitations, for example, we are told over and over that Branna has come back to Howling to "make a home" for herself and that Jake is "dark around the edges". I believe that the author sometimes came across a word or expression she liked and used it wayyyy too much

("belligerent" is another example). In one scene, Jake thinks he does not want any "emotional entanglement" and a page or two later, that is exactly the expression Branna says. All the characters use the same vocabulary. They don't have their own voice and it makes the story drag because, well, we get the same message almost verbatim from different people. Hence the aforementioned repetitions.

The dialogues were funny and this could have been a really good book with more editing.

Jultri says

This is my first book by Wendy Vella and I like it - a lot! The dialogue/bantering was great and the main and supporting characters were quite likable. It was a lovely introduction to her series, set in Lake Howling, small town in Oregon. This is where the reclusive Branna O'Donnell finds herself, returning back to the town she spent 3 years in during her midteens, following the death of her mother in a car accident. After leaving the town and her distant grieving father behind when she left for university, she never expected to be back, but back she is, upon the death of one of her few dear friends and surrogate parent who resided in the little town. She has been bequeathed her friend's house and worldly possessions, and so Branna intends to make a quick trip to Lake Howling to sort out the legal requirements and pack up some sentimental items while selling the rest. Unfortunately, Lake Howling has other plans. An accident leaves her with a head injury and enforced medical intervention, which Branna neither requested nor appreciates. In fact, due to a combination of her hospital phobia and social avoidance tendency, she declines treatment but is not left with a choice, when the hunky, cantankerous Jake McBride comes knocking reluctantly on her door.

Jake has been left a changed man following a stint in Iraq as army doctor. He has left medicine behind him to work as a mechanic, fixing cars instead of people, because it is less painful and traumatic that way. He prefers his own company and so is mightily annoyed when he was importuned into checking on Branna. Jake becomes even more annoyed when the stubborn woman, who clearly is concussed, refuses any assistance. He promptly carries her protesting and ungrateful body off to the medical clinic for treatment and observation. She tells him bluntly, where she wants him to go instead. And so Branna and Jake renew their high school acquaintance under less than stellar circumstances. Their antagonistic interactions continue even after Branna's recovery. The injury has forced Branna to stay in Lake Howling for longer than she intended, but the charm of the town and it's citizens lure her to extend her stay for an indefinite while. She, who has been used to her own company for so many years, finds herself surprisingly and pleasantly enjoying the company of others. She slowly strengthens bonds of friendship started a decade earlier and acquaints herself with new people and old ones she chose to hold herself apart from in the past. Most astonishingly, she finds herself warming to Jake, even though this more surly, pensive and private man is very different to the good-looking, popular young boy she crushed on at school. Jake in turn is finding a new leash on life in Branna, who seems to be pulling him out of the black hole he has found himself in after Iraq. They both have a tonne of emotional garbage to deal with before their HEA not to mention a sinister person on the loose, who seems bent on running Branna out of town.

So as mentioned above, I love the humorous dialogue and the appealing characters. I like the slow-burn romance and Branna's backstory and how it has affected her personality. I like how she slowly got reeled in by the citizens of Lake Howling and how she learnt to open her heart up to them while realising that loneliness did not have to prevail. The mystery side -plot was not bad, although I did guess the baddie, but it only really forms a small part of the novel.

A few things bothered me. The heroine and hero were both twenty-six. Much was mentioned of the fact that Branna skipped 2 years of school (due to her intelligence) when she got to Lake Howling, which made her different and more of an outcast. That should make Jake twenty-eight since they were in the same class.

Now, let's assume he's twenty-six and since he didn't skip years, how did he manage to work as a doctor in Iraq, because he barely graduated then and would still need to do his internship before being of any use in Iraq? The Sheriff, Cubby, was also twenty-six, which would make him the youngest Sheriff in the country. Oh, and Branna was an English professor! Amazing, how industrious these twenty-six year old young ones are which makes the rest of us seem like underachievers! The other problem I had was Jake's propensity, every time he encountered anything medically related, to flash the most perfect medical dictionary definition for that condition. It was just strange and a bit absurd. I understand that the author wants to convey that he remains a doctor at heart even after walking away from his career, but doctors do not spit out medical definitions automatically at every turn. They might ponder the management of the case before them or they flashback to similar cases they have seen previously or they think of dinner and the game score. They don't walk around compulsively defining medical words.

Still all good fun and I will be checking out the other books by her. Nice narration and I must say, I love the fact that this is third-person POV, which is such a rarity these days in CRs.

Rhi says

A Promise of Home by Wendy Vella is a fantastic - though not without some flaws - romance novel.

Branna O'Donnell returns to Lake Howling, the town she lived in during high school, upon the death of her mentor, Georgie. Georgie has left Branna her house and beloved classic Mustang. Branna hopes to make a new start in Lake Howling, or at least come to peace with her life. A writer by trade, she has but one friend and is not on speaking terms with her father.

Jake McBride, a former Army doctor, is suffering from PTSD and is now a mechanic. Intrigued by Branna, even when they were in high school, he can't keep away from her, even though the last thing he wants is a relationship. Despite this, the two are drawn together and help to heal one another.

Ms Vella does a wonderful job in creating a memorable small town, full of interesting and well-rounded secondary characters. Because she doesn't just focus on Branna and Jake, the reader feels as if the two are part of a real community. What is more, Ms Vella doesn't just create one or two secondary characters, but rather, an entire cast, which helps bring Lake Howling to life.

This is a story about overcoming one's past and letting someone else in. Despite resistance on both sides, Branna and Jake fall in love with each other, and in doing so, help each other heal, because in falling in love with each other, they seek the help they need to fully heal.

That is not to say that this book isn't without flaws. After spending many pages describing Branna's fear of doctors and hospitals, Ms Vella never explicitly details why this is so. The one event from her past that I presume is the cause of this fear is glossed over, which, considering the subject, does a disservice to the character and indeed makes me wonder if the event is merely used as a convenient illustration of the extent to which her father didn't know Branna while she was in high school.

While the sex between Branna and Jake was hot, I was uncomfortable with the first instance of it, because it was not non-consensual, it definitely edged dubious consent. This was, perhaps, not helped by the fact it seemed to come out of nowhere. And while it was made clear that Branna and Jake entered into their sexual relationship with enthusiasm and consent shortly thereafter, the initial part did make me uncomfortable.

While the majority of this book deals with the romance between Branna and Jake, Ms Vella also felt the need

to include a bit of a suspense plot as well, with someone trying to force Branna to leave her new house. This plot feels tacked on but at the same time, I suspect it was used to flesh out some of the secondary characters.

Overall, what makes this book well worth a read is that Ms Vella does her best to create characters that have believable flaws. Even when Branna acts irrationally, Jake supports her, not because he necessarily agrees with her stance, but because he loves her. He also loves her enough to call her on her irrationality. She does a similar thing for him.

A Promise of Home is well worth the read. 4.5 stars.

Shelly says

This is another book I've read recently that I find myself in disagreement with most other reviewers. I really didn't care for much in this book. I didn't like the characters, especially Branna. I found most of them whiny and annoying. Also, I felt like I was reading a book that took place in the South, not Oregon. I've never been there, so maybe they do talk like that, but it seemed odd. Anyway, I won't be making any return trips to Lake Howling.

Terri Lynn says

Chapters - 23

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Print Length: 367 pages

I'm not sure about the whole book, but up to chapter four is told from Branna's boring point of view.

THE LAKE HOWLING SERIES:

1. A Promise Of Home
2. The Texan Meets His Match
3. How Sweet It Is It
4. Only Took You
5. Don't Look Back
6. A Long Way Home

Each of these books can be read as a stand-alone.

I need a book to grip me from the beginning, "A Promise Of Home," is not doing that. It is a bunch of nonsense character talk.

“Ha, ha.” Branna poked out her tongue. “So, to answer your question, no, I have never again sung a note, unless it’s in the shower... alone,” she added. “That band thing traumatized me.”

I'm not a fan of this writing style:

Climbing into bed, she turned off the lamp and closed her eyes. She wasn't sure how long she'd stay, or even if she would, but for now, this was the right place for her to be... right here under Georgie's roof.

When chapter 4 started like this, I stopped reading.

“I like this one better than last week’s mystery muffin, Buster. What’s in it?” “The keyword there, Branna, is mystery.”

Boring talk and muffin talk does not hold my attention. I need more, and this book was not getting better! I could not force my self to read any further.

Marsha Spohn says

First reviewed at Keeper Bookshelf

Branna’s return to Lake Howling, a town that she called home for three brief, pain filled years brought back memories that she wasn’t quite sure what to do with, so as usual she ignored them. She had left for college and never looked back, refusing to feel regret at shaking the dust of this small Oregon town off of her shoes.

The only person she had kept in contact with was Georgie. Her mentor, her friend and in many ways her savior. It was Georgie who had taught Branna the value of herself, to cook, to write, to be whatever she wanted to be. It was the loving friendship of Georgie and her husband Dan that kept Branna sane during those last years of high school. Now Georgie was gone, and she had left her home and Geraldine, her classic Mustang in Branna’s care. She could live here, write here and lose herself here – if the townspeople would let her.

Jake had been that kid in high school that everyone liked, wanted to be around and it was believed had an amazing future ahead of him. War would change that. Jake had taken his talent for medicine onto the battlefields, and what he saw, the death that he dealt with on an almost daily basis would haunt him and one experience would forever change him. He left the medical world to his mother now, as the town’s doctor she would have expected to see Jake join her in her practice, taking care of their friends and neighbors. Instead, Jake now took care of the town’s mechanical needs, fixing cars and trucks instead of people’s lives. Jake was not the man everyone knew anymore, what he brought back home were nightmares and pain.

A Promise of Home is a novel steeped in the life and values of small town, USA. A place where people knew you, your history (good and best forgotten) and where neighbors spoke to each other on the streets and were there for you in the hard times, while celebrating the good times. This town has accepted and taken in Branna as one of their own,, and while she is at first uncomfortable with that closeness it will soon grow on her as second nature. This story is populated with lively, interesting people and some who are not quite what they seem on the surface. Since I’ve already picked up the second novel in this series, The Texan Meets His Match, I know that many of the people in this small town will have their own stories to tell and I’m looking forward to that.

Branna and Jake were a powerful couple. Their backstory, and the developing relationship between them is the backbone of A Promise of Home. Both are wounded spirits from different causes, both refuse to deal with their own issues but do not hesitate to take on the troubles of the other. Jake does a wonderful job of caring for Branna, bringing her out of her shell and protecting her when she needs him the most. Their love story is deep, satisfying, sensuous and believable.

I enjoyed A Promise of Home very much and would not hesitate to recommend this one to any romance

reader. If you enjoy richly populated series with a hometown feel and lots of handsome men in the wings then you'll enjoy this novel.

I received an e-ARC of A Promise of Home from the publisher and NetGalley in exchange for an honest review. That does not change what I think of this novel.

Julie says

A Promise of Home by Wendy Vella is a 2015 publication. I was provided a copy of this book by the publisher and Netgalley in exchange for an honest review.

A combination of suspense, family drama, and romance.

After inheriting a home and a car from a very special friend, Branna returns to Howling, Oregon, the town where she graduated from high school.

Branna, a teacher and successful novelist, never was close to many people in town before, but after a nasty spill that leaves her with a concussion, she finds herself reacquainted with Jake McBride, a man who is obviously struggling with some heavy issues in his life.

Jake bulldozes his way into Branna's carefully constructed and sterile world, leaving her feeling disoriented. Branna and Jake are alike in some ways, both carrying around a lot of baggage, both trying to be in control, and both finding peace and comfort with each other.. Most of the time.

There was a lot going on in this story with all the small town characters. Jake is dealing with a form of PTSD, puzzling everyone by walking away from his promising career as a doctor, Branna has isolated herself from the world after her mother's death left her riddled with guilt, and caused a huge rift to form between her and her father.

There are several side stories, such as Branna befriending a young boy who happens to also have a high IQ like Branna, plus a mystery concerning the woman in town who was once the most popular girl in school, who appears to have it all, but is obviously very unhappy.

Not only that, Branna apparently has an enemy and becomes a victim to severe vandalism, adding a level of suspense to the story.

Having so many threads open like this caused some areas of the book to remain undeveloped, and the story was not as cohesive as a result. Deep down, Jake was a good guy, and I liked him for the most part, except that he was always picking Branna up and throwing her over his shoulder, which might have been okay in the beginning when Branna was refusing to seek medical attention and someone needed to step up and get her a doctor. But, after that, not so much. He also came on too strong, and Branna was always giving in and doing things Jake's way, making him a little too caveman for my taste.

The suspense element was sadly predictable and as the story progressed it became even more obvious what was going on.

The most compelling part of the story was Branna's relationship issues with her father. This storyline was very intense from an emotional standpoint. It was so sad how the death of Branna's mother impacted them

equally hard, but they couldn't connect and grieve together, each of them folding inwardly and drifting apart, allowing bitterness to fester to epic proportions.

Branna will, on occasion, become a little too overwrought, can behave childishly at times, but her character really does improve as the story progresses.

While the author touched on some very important issues with the secondary characters, Jake and Branna's story were strong enough to carry the book by its own merits. Jake's backstory needs to be fleshed out more, instead of adding more complex storylines.

I did enjoy seeing Branna and Jake come out of their shells, lighten up a little and start enjoying life again, with a little help from the power of love.

Overall, the story is enjoyable enough, but needed a little tightening up in some areas. This one gets 3 stars

Katrina says

2.5 stars.

The beginning was really slow, the middle was okay, and the end was just meh. It took me a long time to get a sense of these characters, and there were a lot of subplots going on that it was hard to keep track of. I found Branna to be annoying for most of the book, and when she and Jake confessed their love to each other, I just didn't really believe it.

I think the best part of this book was Branna's relationship with Mikey. She really took him under her wing, and it was great to see that relationship grow into something similar to what she had with Georgie.

This wasn't a bad book, but by the time I got towards the last 75% or so, I just really found myself struggling to care what happened to any of the characters. Had the subplots been fleshed out a little more as opposed to just being something that seem randomly thrown in, I think this could have connected with me a lot better.

Amy Collins says

Good story. I liked Jake and Branna as a couple. I would've given it 5 stars but I felt there were many parts to the storyline not finished.

Did I miss who was actually breaking into her house and destroying her property? After the whole Macy abuse ending...did that just fade away?

Michelle says

Cute story. Can't wait to read about Tex

Valerie says

I liked this book, even though it was kind of predictable. I don't think I'd ever read anything from this author before but I'll check her other books out for sure!

Marissa Chavez says

I love a good small town book! This book was no different! Branna and Jake's story was so good! Even though they both had issues I was happy to that they were there for each other! Can't wait to read the book about Tex and Belle!

Brigitte says

Branna returns to Lake Howling where she went to High School for three years. She is not originally from this small community where everyone knows each other but returns as she has inherited her best friend's home. She is hoping to lead a quiet and peaceful life whilst continuing to fulfil her career as a writer. She is not very good at interacting with others due to some unfortunate and unpleasant circumstances surrounding her from a young age. She avoids emotional involvements for fear of getting hurt. Is she in for a surprise?

Jake was the most popular boy in High School and even though Branna had a crush on him, she put on a good act of having no interest whatsoever. However, after returning from the war in Iraq, where he was a Doctor, he is a changed man. He is no longer the happy go lucky individual. When Branna has an accident and decides to go back home on her own despite the obvious injuries, Penny who witnessed the accident appeals to Jake for help. He stops by her place reluctantly and when he sees the state she is in, she doesn't stand a chance from not seeking medical assistance. Branna is still attracted to him but goes in avoidance mode and he more or less does the same. They are both determined not to let their barriers down to let anyone in but the more they get to know each other, the closer they become and are both intrigued by each other's behaviour. Will they allow themselves to trust each other enough and give in to their feelings? After all, the passion between them is intense when they are together.

I really like the way, the author portrays this community where everyone is there for each other in times of needs. The family and social aspects of their lives are very well portrayed, making everything look more real. Even though the crime rate is more or less non existent, someone is trying to scare Branna away from her home and the support she receives is quite admirable. Jake won't rest until the culprit is caught and his caring and protective side resurface. I absolutely love Jake's parents and his two friends who had me laughing out loud with their banter.

I would fully recommend this book to those who like a sweet romance with the elements of emotional drama, danger and the twists to keep and hold their interests. I will definitely read the other book in this series.

I received this book from the publisher via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review.
