

## Book Review: September 2005

by Yvette Murray, PhD (reviewer at [Sapphic Reader](#))



### **Safe Harbor & Beyond the Breakwater**

**Radclyffe**

**ISBN: 1-933110-13-9 & 1-933110-06-6**

**Trade paper, 2003**

**Lesbian Romance/Action**

**Bold Strokes Books, Inc.**

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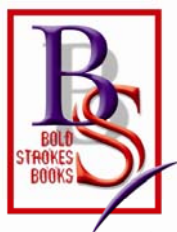
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Reese Conlon, the new deputy sheriff, is an enigma to the residents of Provincetown. Tall and handsome, Reese goes about her job with polite professionalism, offering few clues about the woman inside the impeccable khaki uniform. While investigating a burglary, Reese meets the director of the local clinic, Dr. Tory King. Betrayed by the love of her life, and crippled by an accident that ended her dreams of Olympic gold, Tory buries her disappointments in an exhausting workload. The attraction between Reese and Tory grows as their efforts to serve the small community create frequent contact with each other. Eventually, each woman must choose between the safety of a carefully ordered existence and the vulnerability of opening her heart to passion.

The love story between Reese and Tory continues *Beyond the Breakwater*. In this sequel, the women confront the soul wrenching possibility of losing one another. Tory worries that Reese's bravery in the line of duty will result in her death. Reese fears that she will lose Troy during a difficult pregnancy. *Beyond the Breakwater* is a touching account of lovers coming to terms with the precariousness of life.

Radclyffe, the author of *Safe Harbor* and *Beyond the Breakwater*, is a consummate artist in crafting classic romance fiction. Her numerous best selling works exemplify the splendor and power of Sapphic passion.

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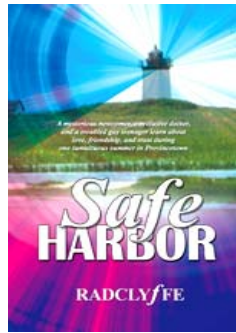
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## Book Review: October 2005

by Cheri Rosenberg (reviewer at [JAW](#))



### Safe Harbor, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.

Radclyffe

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Trade paper, 232 pp, \$14.95

March, 2003

Lesbian Romance/Action

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Award-winning writer Radclyffe lists among her bestselling novels *Safe Harbor*, in which Reese Conlon leaves a military career to become Provincetown's new Deputy Sheriff. Once there, she finds herself fighting homophobia, which is directed at P-Town's local youth. While upholding the law, Reese also discovers truths about herself when she meets and falls in love with Dr. Victoria (Tory) King.

*Safe Harbor* has a character driven plot and presents a diverse well-defined supporting cast with each having an integral contribution to the story. The main character, Reese, is easy to fall in love with. An extremely private person, she has everyone curious to know more about her. "She's handsome, strong, sensitive, tender, and deeply passionate. And devoted—can't beat that," according to her creator Radclyffe; Reese turns more than a few heads. Comparable to a knight in shining armor, she is hard-working, decent, and honest. Reese upholds the law and takes her oath 'to serve and protect' very seriously. Her boss, Sheriff Nelson Parker, and other locals are in awe of this admirable woman.

Sheriff Parker has a lot more than crime to deal with when he learns his daughter Brianna is gay. Radclyffe does a commendable job of describing the anguish he feels as he works his way, hopefully, toward acceptance.

Reese meets Dr. King while out on patrol to check on a break in at the East End Health Clinic. Tory has an "unanticipated visceral reaction" (p. 21) to the precise, professional, and truly stunning sheriff. Having endured a bad breakup and an accident that dashed her Olympic hopes to bits, Tory is leery of a gorgeous, self-assured woman, and she's unnerved that she's so taken with Reese. Trying not to fall for Reese's charm is a daunting task—especially when Reese says things like, "I saw you this morning—kayaking out on the bay. You were so much a part of the sea that you didn't even disturb the rhythm of the waves" (p. 31). Tory endears the reader with her professional manner while adeptly healing the sick in her care. Dr. King is a respected physician who puts other's needs before her own. In hopes of avoiding further heartache, she adamantly tries to deny love. Can she learn to trust Reese and more importantly, can she trust her own feelings?

Brianna (Bri) Parker, the sheriff's gay daughter, is a tough, troubled, and frightened youth who becomes the target of gay bashing. Although strong, Bri is no match for her attacker. Reese helps Brianna overcome obstacles that she and other gay teens face. Surprisingly, even the "gay Mecca" of P-town has its share of hatred. Reese helps not only Bri, but all the other gay kids in her jurisdiction to fight against homophobia.

Tory's sister, Cath, acts as Tory's conscience, playing devil's advocate as she wrestles with her heart and mind. When Tory thinks, "[Reese] has no idea what she's doing—she hasn't a clue to the effect she has on any lesbian with a heartbeat" (p. 111), in fact, Reese has no idea what she does to straight women and men either. Cath may be a straight, married, mother of two, but she empathizes with her sister and can fully appreciate how Tory feels about Reese.

*Safe Harbor* is a love story, a coming out story, and crime drama all rolled into one. When Reese was young, her mother Kate left home to be with her lover, Jean. She reconnects with her mother not knowing what to expect. She also must deal with her father's reaction to the news that she's gay.

Caring deeply about an author's characters, yearning to find out what happens next, feeling like you're a part of the action, and hating for it to end, is what great novels are all about. *Safe Harbor* by Radclyffe is such a novel. From the beginning, Radclyffe uses mystery and foreshadowing to keep the reader interested, and there is never a dull moment. The fabulous setting is the perfect backdrop and makes the reader long for a trip to Provincetown, with its "Mardi Gras energy" (p. 90).

A great story, memorable characters, fresh dialogue, important issues, scenic descriptions, an engaging plot and meticulous editing makes *Safe Harbor* a five star novel that can be enjoyed by both a gay and straight audience. I highly recommend *Safe Harbor* and anything penned by award winning novelist Radclyffe, whose recent accolades include two 2005 Golden Crown Literary Awards for *Fated Love* and *Justice in the Shadows*.

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