



Close to Home

Rachel Spangler

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Kelly Rolen is a CPA—she's smart, she's focused, and she's worked hard to build an orderly career and a respectable life in her hometown of Darlington, Illinois. Everything is precisely as it should be. Well, it is until her father suffers a debilitating stroke during the busiest time of her year—tax season. Suddenly, Kelly finds herself overworked, exhausted, behind schedule, and forced to hire an intern to meet her deadlines.

Elliot Garza is young and brash, but she's also a talented accounting student who is charismatic, driven, and solely focused on completing her internship so she can escape from the bleak Midwestern town to Washington, DC and her dream job. She knows she has the professional skills necessary to do the job well, but she is less certain about her ability to handle her beautiful, prickly, demanding, and compelling new boss.

In this fresh new romance from one of the genre's top young authors, will Kelly's past and Elliot's future add up to something greater than the sum of their escalating attraction, or will the answer to their equation end up hitting too close to home?

Rachel Spangler is the author of ten lesbian romance novels and novellas and the winner of two Golden Crown Literary Society Awards. She pens the popular blog, *Wonder Boi Writes*, and lives with her wife and son in Western New York.

Close to Home Details

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Paulina says

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I struggled with the rating for this book. I liked some aspects of it, I liked the characters and Kelly's struggle broke my heart. But at some point they started going in circles and it got tedious. No matter the argument Elliot came up with Kelly found another issue time after time. Constantly, they took one step forward and two steps back and I was surprised Elliot didn't give up, it was unhealthy. I did like the ending and I did like the chemistry between the main characters. I just wish we spent less time with them repeating the same pattern of behaviour and more on Kelly healing herself.

Tara says

Close to Home is Rachel Spangler's third book set in the tiny fictional college town of Darlington, Illinois. And while it has characters and themes that we've seen in previous books, especially The Long Way Home (I can't speak for Timeless because I haven't read it yet), it delivers something entirely fresh.

Full review (Curve): <http://www.curvemag.com/Reviews/Close...>

Full review (TLR): <https://www.thelesbianreview.com/clos...>

Judith says

I'm not sure this was the best book to start a new year with (a lot of angst) but I loved it anyway. Great characters, great chemistry.

Penny says

More like 3.5

I liked her previous (Perfect Pairing) better.

T.j says

I did not like Kelly when I was reading the long way home, but the minute I heard about this book I was so excited about it. I absolutely loved it and I really loved her..... The book was too good. This is my kind of book.

Arien says

All around solid read, can't say I love it but I certainly enjoyed it. The characters felt like actual people going through their issues, the conflict was well developed and it works as a standalone book. I've not read any other books by the author but now I'll have to take a closer look at what else she has to offer.

Ty says

I've had this book for two months but I haven't been able to bring myself to read it. I love Rachel Spangler's writing so much that having this unread meant I was in a constant state of having something to look forward to. But finally, my desire to read her words overcame my desire to have a future treat, and I dove in.

As expected, I loved it. Something about Spangler's writing always makes me feel like I'm being cracked open and experiencing the story along with the characters. These stories just work their way inside me and make me feel. This time I was trapped in this sensation of seeing no way for Kelly and Elliot to end up happy, but desperately wishing they could be. It was a satisfying read.

Now I need to find something else to look forward to.

Heidi says

Kelly finally got her story told. I liked the way this played out. Very authentic. I've seen people complain about the price of the book. I don't get it, it's less than \$2. I don't think the author sets the price. I enjoyed the book. Worth the extra \$1.20.

Alexis says

I read The Long Way Home a little more than 2 years ago now and don't remember a lot about the story but I definitely remember Kelly. Good grief this woman was awful and in this book she's no different. Still deeply in the closet and super paranoid about people finding out that she likes women she's now forced to interact with Elliot who is an intern she had to hire for tax season.

So if she's so terrible why the rating? Well as awful as Kelly is, she's also a fascinating character. I don't think I've ever read a more closeted character before and it was really interesting reading about what motivated her and just how truly unhappy and lonely she had become since Beth walked away from her in The Long Way Home. Seriously this woman needs to be strapped to the hood of a car and driven through a car wash because how else are you going to scrub off that amount of self hate.

I have a huge soft spot for the character of Elliott. She's out and proud and truly wants to make a difference in the world but first she needs to finish her internship. I honestly don't know how she managed to put up with Kellie's 'come here, go away' behavior. If that was me I would have been running for the hills a long time ago but not Elliott. The woman really has a tremendous amount of patience and a heart of gold.

It was definitely nice to see Beth and Rory again since they play a vital role in this book. Stevie and Jody

from Timeless, (which I will read next) also make a small appearance. The book is well written and the chemistry between Kellie and Elliott is good as well. The only thing that bugged me little was the ending. It felt a little abrupt and I definitely would have liked to see more of Elliott and Kellie together. Overall this wasn't a bad read.

This ends with a 3,75* rating. TW for homophobic language.

Cab says

I really enjoyed this story. I wasn't entirely sure what to expect and I occasionally found the dynamic between Kelly and Elliot. For that matter, I was left wondering why Rory had such a antagonist relationship with Kelly, beyond the obvious. Regardless, this was an interesting easy to get into read.

Julia says

I usually avoid books set in small towns for the exact reasons that kept Kelly in the closet in this one — the rumor mill and homophobic people who can't mind their own business. Rachel Spangler, however, is an author I like enough that I was willing to give this a chance, and I'm very glad I did.

Kelly is a public accountant who works with her dad taking care of the finances and taxes of everyone else in the city. Her only friends are her dad and her sweet and caring ex-girlfriend Beth, who is soon getting married with another woman, Rory — they're the main couple from *The Long Way Home*. When Kelly's dad has a stroke, Beth convinces her that she needs an intern at the office.

Enter Elliot Garza: lesbian feminist ready to change Kelly's life. Main goals: smashing the patriarchy; tearing down the financial system that favors the rich and hurts the poor and oppressed minorities. Raised by a wonderful single mom, she's ambitious, smart, confident, dedicated, and chose to go to college in a small town just to see if she could handle it ("it" being the homophobic people I mentioned). *"I'm living proof that a woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle."*

Kelly has been in the closet forever; Elliot is the definition of "out and proud". Kelly despises change; Elliot is all for adventure and new experiences that will eventually lead her to Washington, D.C., where she can get started on her world domination plan. Kelly is also not a big fan of sharing, while Elliot desperately wants to know what makes her who she is. With such strong, different personalities, they clash a lot from the moment they meet. To add to the drama, Elliot is leaving town as soon as her internship is over, so they're on a limited timeline. Oh, and Kelly is also on the verge of a serious emotional breakdown at the prospect of losing her dad.

I just couldn't stop reading this book, and I say this a lot about Rachel Spangler's works. She writes interesting, passionate characters, and stories that suck you in and won't let you go until you're done. That added to the witty dialogue and the romance that progresses with a lot of up and downs makes for my favorite kind of read. The only thing I was wary about is the boss/intern dynamic, as I'm not fond of power imbalances, but the end of such dynamic was so inevitably close that I didn't mind, and besides, the book dealt really well with the topic of consent. I love books that discuss this kind of thing openly, not to mention all the discussions Elliot and Kelly had about feminist topics.

All in all, this might not be Rachel Spangler's greatest book, but still a pretty wonderful read for me.

Rach (Les Rêveur) says

I can't believe this is the first review I have ever written for one of Rachel Spangler's books. So without further ado, here's my review of Close To Home.

Close To Home is the third novel in Rachel Spangler's 'A Darlington Romance' series and it's one helluva book.

I would recommend reading the first book A Long Way From Home and then the second book Timeless before starting this one. It will help with continuity with the story lines and secondary characters, who most of where main characters in either the first two books.

Kelly has always lived in the closet, so much so it ended her last and only previous relationship. Living in a small town is her main reason for being closeted, not to mention the gossip that could ensue. When her father gets sick and can no longer work at their small accountancy firm she accepts the help of an intern, Elliot. Elliot is young, obviously gay and doesn't care who she offends but she's also smart, forthright and caring to a fault. How could Kelly not fall for her? But will Kelly really ever come out of the closet long enough to be worthy of Elliot?

As much as Kelly had some redeeming qualities by the end of A long way from home I still finished the book disliking her. So I knew Rachel Spangler had some work to do for me to really enjoy her starring role in this novel. I literally went from loathing Kelly, to being attracted to Kelly, to really liking Kelly and how sweet she was with Elliot, to then thinking Kelly was crazy and it started all over again. Ultimately, she's complex and my second favourite character in the series after Elliot whom I just have such a major crush on. Elliot's dashing, androgynous and with such an amazing personality that just had me enchanted from the first moment she graced the page. It's funny, Elliot's relationship with her mother is very similar to mine and I think I understood her personality quirks and her fight a little better than any other character I've ever read. A lot of her morals and values are similar to mine which makes me wonder if it was the way I was raised in similarity to her (fictional) upbringing that aligns our personalities so well.

The introspective musings of both Elliot and Kelly are written so eloquently that you can imagine the feelings and the build up actually happening to you, the reader. It is quite a beautiful feat that Spangler is able to do this.

This is a sexy little number with a delicious build up in the love making department. For example the first sex scene knocked me from my seat because I was not expecting it but it was a very pleasant surprise but then the second and third sex scenes were even better and each time I felt a little taken aback.

I don't have one negative thing to say about the book, I hope this series doesn't end quite yet. Maybe Doctor Patel needs her own story? (I'd actually love that). But who knows?

Undoubtedly 5 stars.

Yoly says

Nice story!

Sabrina Grafenberger says

Kelly Rolen is a fascinating and complex main character and the reason I'm giving this book 4 stars.

At the beginning of the novel we get to know her as a cold and guarded person who's paranoid about people finding out that she's a lesbian. She has been living in the closet since forever and her previous and only relationship ended because of that. Kelly has become bitter and full of self-loathing.

Throughout the book (with the help of sweet and lovable Elliot) we see a more vulnerable and human side of Kelly as she struggles to accept herself and let go of her fears.

Rachel Spangler has written this very well and believable, it's not often that a character moves me so deeply. Kelly will probably stick with me for a while.

Tiff says

Redeeming a character can be a tough sell. How do you make a character, which said the character was downright terrible in a previous book your main character? Add into the fact that this is a romance novel, and your reader needs to have the feels. Tough, so tough, but Rachel Spangler does it like a boss.

If you read *The Long Way Home* you will remember, Kelly Nolan. Kelly was Beth's longtime lover when Beth meets Rory. (side note: you can totally read this a standalone, but I would recommend reading both, just so you can see how far this character comes, and both of these books are really good. Don't short change yourself). Kelly is sort of the villain in *The Long Way Home*. She loses Beth because of her paranoia of anyone finding out they are lovers. She's not a great girlfriend to Beth and her restrictions, her closet become too much for the relationship to withstand.

So now, we meet up with Kelly again. Kelly is still single, a little heart broken, lonely and above all else still striving to be perfect. Tax season is around the bend and as a CPA, Kelly has a million things workwise to take care of. Add onto the heaping pile, her dad (her mentor, her hero) has just had a massive stroke. Beth, still in the picture as the supportive friend, encourages Kelly to take on an intern to help lighten the load.

This is where Elliott Garza comes in. Elliott is a lot like Rory, which isn't a plus in Kelly's book. She's Kelly opposite, she is out, she's a feminist, she is ready to take the world by storm and smash social injustices. Personality wise Elliott is the direct opposite of Kelly in almost every way

For all their differences, together they work. Elliot exposes Kelly's softer sides, the one she has buried long ago to avoid being the whipping post for the small town of Darlington. Kelly learned long ago as a child, that because her mother walked out on them, that she would always be subject to the town's gossip. Elliot brings out Kelly's true nature and it was quite honestly mesmerizing to read. These two have a dynamic relationship. Fantastic read!
