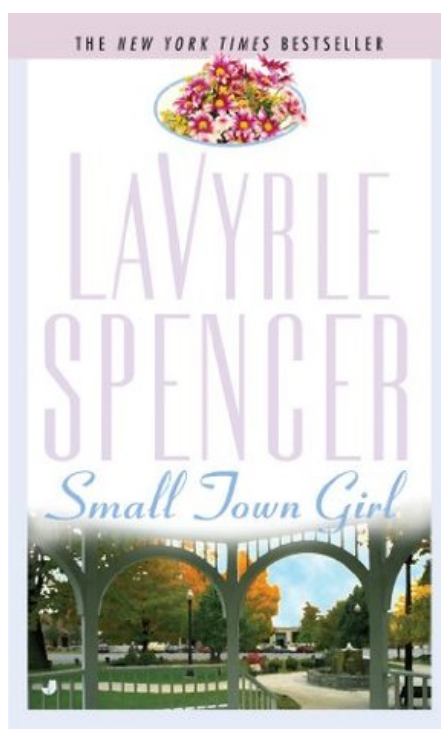




Small Town Girl

LaVyrle Spencer

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In one of her most unforgettable novels, *New York Times* bestselling author LaVyrle Spencer chronicles the passionate awakening of a country music star who embraced fame but fled from love. Eighteen years ago, Tess McPhail left her tiny hometown of Wintergreen, Missouri for the bright lights of Nashville and never looked back. Now, one of country music's biggest stars, "Mac" is a hardworking woman with little time for a personal life—until her sister insists she come home to help care for their widowed mother.

The welcome Mac receives is less than warm, especially from her former next-door neighbor Kenny Kroneck. Now a handsome divorcé with a teenage daughter, Kenny refuses to give Mac the time of day. But when Mac discovers that Kenny's daughter is a promising country music talent, she assumes the role of mentor and gradually learns to open her hardened heart to the sweet rewards of caring and commitment.

Small Town Girl Details

Date : Published August 5th 2003 by Berkley (first published January 1st 1997)

ISBN :

Author : LaVyrle Spencer

Format : Kindle Edition 383 pages

Genre : Romance, Fiction, Contemporary, Contemporary Romance

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From Reader Review Small Town Girl for online ebook

Mo says

[Honestly the way Faith was treated was horrible. (hide spoiler)]

Michelle [Helen Geek] says

03/09/2014

Overall Rating = 2.5 Stars

Book Cover / Book Blurb / Book Title = 3 / 4 / 5 = 4 Stars

Writer's Voice = 3 Stars

Character / Secondary Character Development = 3 / 3 = 3 Stars

"Did I like" Hero / Heroine = 4 / 3 = 3.5 Stars

Story / Background Story Development = 3 / 3.5 = 3 Stars

"Did I like the Damned Thing" = 3 Stars

Ending = 3 Stars

Worth the Chili = 1 Stars -- [\$9.99 on Barnes & Noble]

Smexy [HEAT] Rating = Mild

368 pages

This is one of my all time favorite authors. Saying this, I never would have purchased this eBook if I hadn't received the Barnes and Noble settlement and had book dollars to spend. Ten bucks is a bit much for any book and this one is chock full of mediocrity.

I remember reading this one when it first came out. I wasn't a huge fan then -- but forgot about it. After about 30% or so this time, I remembered it all. Mediocre and mundane. My feelings didn't change this go round. It was a flat story for me. It is a bit dated too - which wouldn't have bothered me, if the story was better.

What did I like about this one?

1 -- The story concept. A girl who loves music and has the "voice of an angel" goes to Nashville and hits it big. She goes home years later to take care of her ill mother and falls for the "one that she never liked." What? Yeah ... a rather droll story, but it could have worked better if we liked the characters more. I liked the concept, but the execution lacked.

2 -- Casey. The daughter of our book Hero. She is 17 and a high school senior. She has grit and gumption and is a really great kid. Seems to have her head on straight and knows what makes her happy. At 17, what a novelty. I enjoyed her.

3 -- The relationship between Tess [book heroine] and her mother / Tess and her sisters could be me. I have two older sisters and one is just a pain in my ass. The other sister is an absolute joy and is the peacekeeper of our bunch. The insight provided on the mothers actions are spot on. My mother annoys the crap out of me and half the time I can't figure it out. She is a true puzzle. Aging parents provide us our best and worst life challenge. No one prepares us. Goes to show that God has a remarkable sense of humor. The love Tess has for her eclectic family is great writing and worth the time to read this book. A small golden nugget in a rather large mess, but is worth it, if you have the patience to wait it out.

4 -- Love the title of this book. Perfect.

A few things that didn't work so well:

1 -- This relationship [Tess & Kenny] didn't make much sense to me. Tess and Kenny were kids together. They were next door neighbors, but not particularly close. Kenny had a crush on Tess from the time they were kids. Tess wouldn't give him the time of day; he was just yucky. Jump ahead 20 years and she's home. They keep running into each other. He's changed. She's changed. Now there's a spark and they fan it to a flame ... It all sounds good, but the reader never feels any of this emotion. As I was reading it, I kept thinking that Tess was a bitch and Kenny deserved better. Maybe.

2 -- Kenny. I liked him, but I really hated what he did to his long time friend and lover [whatever her name is]. Maybe they were both guilty of wasting each others time on a relationship that was only "comfortable." Eight years. I just thought he was a real shit for not ending things when he decided he was going to pursue things with Tess. Or, better yet, when he realized his emotions, outside of friendship, weren't engaged. Cheating is too strong a word for what happens here, but you feel the wrong-ness just the same. It makes for an uncomfortable read at times.

3 -- I thought the damned thing would NEVER END. Gah! Too much mundane detail. The relationship didn't even get it "together" until you are at about 80%.

4 -- The price. This book is years old and Penguin still wants \$10. Get this one at the library. I think I can loan it too. Let me know if you want it.

I hate to give bad reviews for an author I love. In my opinion Lavyrle Spencer is a High Queen of romance. She, and others like her, put this genre' on the map [so to speak]. This is not one of her better books. If you need an LS rec, let me know. I'm reading some oldie's right now and have these fresh in my mind.

This is a good book if you are interested in reading Ms. Spencer's complete backlist or if you just like to read anything music related, or found this in a box of books in your garage and had nothing better to do. It isn't great, but if you get it at the library, you should be good.

Happy Reading!

Marcia Dene says

This is the second time I've read this in the last 20 years. Its a quick read for me because it holds my interest. Its a charming story. Its a chick flick on paper. Everything about the book I could see happening in real life. Not everything works out perfectly and that keeps it real as well. I would love to see Hallmark to take this on as one of their projects.

Mary says

Eighteen years ago, a young and hopeful Tess McPhail left her tiny hometown of Wintergreen, Missouri, for the bright lights of Nashville and she never once looked back. Now considered to be one of country music's brightest stars, "Mac" McPhail is a millionairess many times over, whose career is her life. At thirty-five years old, Mac has no time for marriage, children, or kinfolk - until her sisters insist that she finally come home to help care for their widowed mother, Mary.

Assuming that staying in Wintergreen for the next month will be merely dreary, Mac is totally unprepared for what awaits her. After almost two decades spent basking in the public's adoration of her, she is suddenly an inconspicuous, almost inconsequential person - insulted by her jealous older sister, enraged by her intractable mother, and ignored by Kenny Kronek, the next-door neighbor she mercilessly taunted all through high school. Now a handsome divorcé who dotes upon his teenage daughter, Casey, Kenny is widely respected in the community. And he seems downright indifferent towards Mac, refusing to even give her the time of day.

Once she discovers Casey is a promising country music talent, Mac assumes the role of singing mentor for the girl. She gradually becomes an integral part of life in Wintergreen, and the feigned indifference between Mac and Kenny soon turns from playful bickering to sudden passion. By month's end, Mac McPhail is a completely changed woman; she has not only grown to treasure the priceless solidarity of family and community, but also opened up her heart to love.

Yet what was possible in the small town of Wintergreen, appears to be nothing more than a naive fantasy back in Nashville. Under Nashville's bright and harsh stage lights - in the realm of super stardom - is there room for caring and commitment; or is a woman who is worshipped by millions destined to always be alone?

While I certainly enjoyed reading this book, the story was somewhat predictable to me in places. I appreciated that it was an easy read, and it was definitely well-written. However, I must admit that this wasn't my absolute favorite book by LaVyrle Spencer. I give this book a B+!

Becky Adams says

I don't finish books that don't hold my attention and I finished this one in a day.

Virginia Markhart says

Such a great book. Small town girl who grew up to be a major country singing star. She comes home to take care of her mother who is recovering from hip surgery. She is the youngest of three girls. One sister is very supportive but the other is full of jealousy. Interesting story line there. Boy next door is the nerdy kid who got teased by everyone in high school. But he is older now and raising a teenage daughter who happens to have an amazing voice as well. Sparks fly between them. the complication is that he has an eight year relationship with a local woman who he eventually drops when the truth comes out about his everlasting love for the girl next door. I felt kind of sorry for her, but she took it well.

As much as I enjoyed the book, I think it could have ended about ten pages sooner. The last pages were just fluff and added nothing to the story.

Laura says

Tess McPhail is a superstar country singer that has returned to her small town after 18-years of making it to the big time in order to care for her mother, Mary. Mary will be having hip surgery and Tess' older sisters have decided it is her turn to care for Mary.

Tess secretly resents having to give up her busy career to return to small town living. She is also hurt that her mother doesn't seem to value the gifts that Tess sends and will not let her build her a new house. She almost finds herself a stranger with her mother after so many years. They don't really understand one another. Tess dutifully helps her mother through surgery and stays for four weeks to help her get back on her feet, literally.

Tess has two older sisters, Judy and Renee. Judy is a hairstylist and has great resentment for Tess and her fame. It doesn't help that Tess thinks that Judy has let herself go and could stand to lose a few pounds. Renee and Tess get along great, but Renee is busy helping her daughter prepare for her wedding.

Her first night in town, Mary's neighbor, Kenny Kronek, stops by with salt for the softener. He walks right in and annoys Tess by ignoring her presence. Kenny remembers Tess as a stuck-up high school girl, and Tess remembers Kenny as a klutzy nerd. The two clash at first, but slowly Tess sees how Kenny is an important part of her family's life and she also loves Kenny's daughter Casey. Casey has an amazing voice and Tess is determined to help start her career.

Will Tess be able to change her life to keep her family at the heart while maintaining her high profile career? Will Tess be able to find love . . . with the boy next door?

Truthfully I thought this novel was okay, but not the greatest. I feel bad as it is the September FLICKS book club selection and I know a couple people in my book club love this book. I just didn't fall in love with the romance in this novel.

SPOILER ALERT

Tess's hatred for Kenny at the beginning of the novel felt forced and I didn't really like them together. I really didn't like how Kenny has had a girlfriend for eight years, Faith, and she seems to be a wonderful woman. But although Kenny and Casey love her and she is an important part of their life, they seem to have no problem throwing her away for Tess. I did like how Kenny was able to put his business on the back burner to be a part of Tess's life. I guess overall I didn't feel the chemistry between the two leads that I would expect in a romance novel. I also am not a country music fan, but I don't think that lessened my enjoyment of the novel.

SPOILER END

Overall, I thought Small Town Girl was an okay novel. I did enjoy reading it, but didn't love it. I much preferred Spencer's Bittersweet to this novel.

Joanna Loves Reading says

Lovely story telling. This will not be my last By this author. Hope to write more later!

Buddy Read with Whiskey/Kyraraker over at Romance Book Buddy Reading group!

Nicole says

This was my first book I read by Lavyrl. It was at the library and had just been returned. For some reason I was drawn to the title and cover art and so I checked it out.

Since then I've read it twice and I have loved it both times. It's a GREAT summer beach read, or pool read. A

sweet story, with of course, a typical happy ending - but don't worry - there are plenty of twists and turns though.

Jan130 says

3.5 to 4 stars for this older CR. I had read it before, years ago, but could hardly remember it. I've been rereading a few of LaVyrle Spencer's books in the last few months, and so far they do seem to stand the test of time fairly well. You do have to make allowances in this one for the nineties fashions though 0_0

Tess McPhail is the titular small town girl, who left home at 17 to make her way in the world of country music. Now, eighteen years later, she's a huge megastar (think Reba McEntyre). Tess has now reluctantly come home for a month to the tiny town where she grew up, to care for her elderly mother following an operation.

Tess at first is annoyed by the neighbour, widowed Kenny Kronek, who has been helping her mother out for years. Tess and Kenny went to school together, and he used to have a crush on her, while she found him just a pain. But it's not long before Tess and Kenny find that as adults they are deeply attracted to each other, and a fledgling relationship begins to build.

Spencer does a lovely job of slowly building the love between her MCs. It's complicated by Tess's commitments to life in the fast-paced music industry, and by Faith, Kenny's girlfriend of eight years. It takes quite a while for Kenny to recognise and accept that his and Faith's relationship hasn't been going anywhere - they are together mainly out of convenience. But to the reader it doesn't feel like an awkward triangle. Spencer writes her characters convincingly. From the MCs to the large cast of secondary characters, these seem like real people, some generous, some petty, with the range of typical human weaknesses and human kindnesses. This is part of the joy of Spencer's books. You feel as if you know and understand these people.

In some ways the book is a homage to small town life, although Spencer doesn't shy away from showing the limitations of such a life, especially to characters such as Tess. It's also a fairly clean read - some of her other books are a little saucier than this one. There is very little sex, and it's not really explicitly described. The MCs are pretty much clean-living, decent, church-going people. At the same time they are real people who recognise and feel the pull of sexual attraction. It's not what I would call a typically 'Christian romance', as the element of religion is not a key driver in the book.

However the romance element in the book is strong, and the eventual HEA is lovely. The resolution of the plot was easy to see coming, and was perhaps a little too 'pat', but it was still satisfying and an acceptable way to resolve the MCs' differences. I did like the realistic touch that Tess (view spoiler). That seemed quite in line with her character. The incredible natural singing talent of Kenny's daughter Casey, who lived right next door to Tess's Mom, was a little too neat, although it did add a strong plot element.

But overall, this book for me was still a good read, in spite of the dated fashions etc. I enjoyed the characters and storyline, and it kept my interest all the way through, even though the romance was a little slow-burn. I also enjoyed Ms Spencer's attempt at song-writing - the title song of 'Small Town Girl' was very fitting and played a key role in the book.

Kimberly says

you can tell I am running out of stuff to read since I haven't had time to visit a library here yet! this was one mom gave me! so predictable!

LaVerne Clark says

After a lot of internal debate - this would have to be my favourite LaVyrle Spencer book.

I was originally attracted to LaVyrle Spencer's work as a teen, because of how similar our names were - and then, after reading and devouring EVERYTHING ELSE she wrote, I hoped her magic way with words may somehow rub off on me (ahh, the arrogance of youth!).

This lady sure knows how to write and draw such deep emotions from her readers. I had to reach for the tissue box on numerous occasions, but it was so worth the journey.

I've just scanned all of Ms. Spencer's backlist to see if I've missed any, but sadly, I've already read them all. I'll just have to keep re-reading the other gems written by this Queen of Romance and be satisfied with that. I guess Ms. Spencer deserves her retirement, but boy, do I miss her work!

Thank you for so many wonderful years of reading, Ms. Spencer. You're missed greatly, but your talent is never forgotten.

Susan says

Home town girl makes good--millionaire good. Fuming the whole way back home--her sisters have forced her into it, because it's her turn to take care of Momma. Before the month ends, she's learned a few things she never would have if she'd not made the journey. The best part of the story is her banter with Kenny Kronek--boy next door she grew up with. Kept me wondering, but in the end boy does get girl. (For the mature reader.)

Lyuda says

A very mixed feeling about this book. A *small town girl* Tess McPhail, left her hometown eighteen years ago to follow her dream to become a singer. Now, one of the country music's brightest star, she came home for a month to take care of her ailing mother. On the surface nothing changed in the small town: people, her mother's house, stores, sidewalks- they all appeared to be frozen in time. But what Tess didn't expected is that being in this town, encountering her past would change her, make her realize how lonely she is on the top of the superdome.

Ms. Spencer is a masterful storyteller. She created a very vivid and realistic description of a small town and its inhabitants. Everybody knows everybody, nothing goes unnoticed. I love Tess's interaction with her stubborn, set in her ways mother. Unfortunately, the romance part of the story left me uneasy. Kenny Kronek, a next-door neighbor and a former high school geek, always had a crush on Tess but his feelings were never reciprocated. Moreover, Tess was one of his high school tormentors. Now, eighteen years later, Kenny, a handsome divorcee is a respected member of community, raising his daughter. He is also in a comfortable relationship with his longtime girlfriend Faith. So, as you would expect in romance,

when Kenny and Tess met again, eighteen years later, sparks flew and their initial antagonism turned into quite opposite feeling. But throughout all of this development he maintains his relationship with Faith. This was a very big turn off for me. It made me dislike the main characters. I felt so bad for Faith who made a home for Kenny, who was almost a surrogate mother for Kenny's daughter. I know from reading of her other books, the author doesn't shy away from some controversial topics but this was just too much for me.

WhiskeyintheJar/Kyraryker says

3.3 stars

For more comments, quotes, and discussion - [Buddy Read Small Town Girl](#)

This leans a little more towards women's fiction with the focus more on the heroine Tess, her career, and how she integrates with her family life. Our hero Kenny doesn't get many povs but when he does appear on the pages, you'll love the heck out of him.

It was super refreshing to have the heroine with the rich glamorous lifestyle and how the dynamics were a bit different because of that. The author does an A+ job of bringing you into the heroine's world. I hate to be all, oldies did it better, but I can't help but compare the obvious research and how fantastic the author flushed out Tess, story, and characters, to how a fair amount of newer publications skimp on this; it does wonders in helping you sink into the story. There were a couple times the details slowed things down but overall, I was fully immersed into this world.

I would definitely read another by this author again, a few are highly recommending Hummingbird. The romance wasn't prevalent enough on the pages for me but when it was, I liked how they sparked off one another. If you're looking for a heroine focused with emotional family dynamics, this was fantastically written.
