



Taking Fire

Radclyffe

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After two years and too many lost troops, Navy medic Max de Milles is ready to go home. Her last tour is up in four days and she will soon be catching a transport to the States. Life is looking good until she gets detailed to evacuate a humanitarian group in south Somalia.

Rachel Winslow and her Red Cross team are caught in the crossfire during a vicious civil uprising, but she refuses to abandon her team members as the rebels close in on their camp. By the time Max and the Black Hawk arrive, it may already be too late.

Hunted by extremists, Max and Rachel are forced to work together if they are to survive, and in the process, discover something far more lasting.

Taking Fire Details

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From Reader Review Taking Fire for online ebook

Justina Johnson says

This fourth book in the 'First Responders' series initially focuses on an emergency response field outpost in Somalia with multi-national delegates from the Red Cross, Somalis from the Red Crescent Society, and a French medical team from Doctors Without Borders. It seems this outpost in question is targeted to be attacked so a serious push is put into motion to evacuate everyone, but especially one woman, Rachel Wilson. Ah, the mystery and the ramifications have been established. Things get really intense, casualties occur, and all manner of complications crop up. This is top-notch, first class and way exciting. So I think the fourth book is a tribute to the series. Additionally, it has a most interesting second half with two sets of complexities including a heated love linkup with its own astounding form of fireworks intertwined with a bunch of political hoopla. Positively delightful!

Rachel Winslow...who is she and why is she so important? Everyone, especially me, wants to know. I was completely drawn in. Rachel appears to be a top-tier volunteer yet has a father who must be way up there on the food chain. She tries hard to distance herself but that looks like a lose/lose situation. Nevertheless, she handles herself admirably during the assault on the compound, but displays a major stubbornness about leaving before everyone else is evacuated. Rachel and Max have a perfectly delicious prickly pear relationship that under fire transforms to a bit of a mutual admiration society. Rachel is a bit more difficult to get a handle on in the second half of the book where location, danger, and constant life-and-death threats are minimal to non-existent. However, I think she by and large negotiated both sections of the book fairly well. Rachel is good stuff!

Max, Commander de Miles, field savvy surgeon and then some, is days away from getting her final discharge papers when this major evacuation campaign is rapidly set into motion. Her unconscious self seems to continuously battle with demons and a sense of failure, but she never seems to let that into her waking, focused, on-duty persona. The author presents some statistical data about how troops' morale and focus really improve when proficient medical personnel are assigned to dangerous missions. It was wondrously informative and raised my level of appreciation for Max even more. She not only performs brilliantly in life threatening situations within a medical purview, but her soldiering skills are also quite impressive. It makes sense that when she is in a civilian setting in the second half of the book, she becomes an ER doctor and probably could have handled a position with the trauma ward. I really adored Max and rooted for and with her right from the start. Not surprisingly to me, she is a really tender and compassionate lover. Fantabulous!

The two sections in this book occurring with entirely different venues are substantially different from anything I've read so far in the First Responder series, but it seems very reasonable in this situation because of who Rachel really is. I loved Max, but Rachel is no slouch even when she seems a bit difficult to understand at times. Hopefully, this isn't the last book in the First Responder series, but if it were, this is a fine finale and completely satisfying adventure. Spectacular!

NOTE: This book was provided by Bold Strokes Books for the purpose of a review on Rainbow Book Reviews.

Jem says

Radclyffe is a brand. It's a certain style, a certain pace and certain kinds of leads. If you like the brand, go for it. This book lives up to the brand.

Lynne says

Review originally posted: Taking Fire: A First Responder Novel

Right before I was to attend the Bold Stroke Books (BSB) Festival in Nottingham, England, I realized that I had only read two books from the publisher (Secret Lies by Amy Dunne and Swons and Klons by Nora Olsen). I decided to see if there were any books from BSB that sounded interesting and read them before I attended the festival (for my second year). I stumbled across Taking Fire: A First Responders Novel by Radclyffe, and was able to immediately read the first three chapters (here is the link where you can access this). It really grabbed me and I requested a Net Galley, and was able to finish it before the festival.

Taking Fire tells the story of Max de Milles and Rachel Winslow who meet in a hail of gunfire. Max is a Navy medic and is within a few days of ending her second tour where she will be able to return to her empty life in New York. However, she is called into a mission to evacuate a Red Cross group in Somalia, with special interest in evacuating Rachel. Rachel is working with the Red Cross, and her father has some connections that might put her at risk. Rebels attack the Red Cross camp just as the Navy helicopters arrive, and Rachel refuses to leave her team. This causes Rachel, Max, another aid worker, and a wounded soldier to be left behind in the ruined camp, never sure when the rebels will return. Now it is up to Max to keep them safe until the Navy is able to return. Can Rachel and Max deal with their growing attraction and keep everyone alive until help arrives? And if help arrives, why was the evacuation ordered before the rebels even attacked?

When I requested this book from NetGalley, I requested another similar book from the same publisher. I thought going into the books that this one would be the one I liked better, but sadly that was not the case. It was decent, but it was a lot different from what I had imagined from the book description and it really lost steam for me at the halfway point. I was expecting Max and Rachel to be the only ones in the jungle, to be fighting their way back, and that plot would take most of the book. Instead, there were two other people and they hunker down for one day until the rescue comes, which is the first half of the book. I probably would have been more receptive to the story if the summary had been closer to what actually happened.

The best part of the whole book for me was Max; she was amazing. She is extremely flawed, but wonderfully strong, and within her exist so many dichotomous parts. She is a medic, but also has to shoot and kill to do her job. She cares for others, even beyond her medical skills, but lives in a very isolated way. Her ability to take charge when the four of them are left behind was amazing and really fun to read. The stubbornness in her and her willingness to put everyone else before herself really made you fall for her.

On the other hand, Rachel was still mostly an enigma by the end for me. Like Max realizes about Rachel, is that it is hard to tell who is real, the woman from the jungle or the one from high society. She was likeable, and her willingness to adapt to the situation was enjoyable, especially when she had to take up guard duty with the gun. However, her stubbornness, which was matched by Max's, came across as a little grating as it interfered with Max's ability to keep them safe. Although, I did respect her for being very open about what

and who she wants. Max noted that she had the “eyes of a woman who knew what she wanted.”

For me the romance didn't really work, but this may be due to the fact that I am never a huge fan of romance. The attraction between the two women was obvious from shortly after they met at the opposite ends of a gun. However, I found some of the moments in the jungle where their attraction and lust start to win out a bit jarring and off-putting for me. My preference is for a slow build of chemistry, where as they were both much more lust lead. They do have a nice sense of humor between them. For example, “‘We don't have time for a long engagement.’ ‘Well, I'm not ready to elope.’” However, by the end of the book, I wasn't as invested in their relationship and I wasn't really cheering for them (not that I wanted them to separate, I just didn't really care).

Grif, the wounded soldier, and Amina the other aid worker were some other good background characters. Grif was hilarious, even though he was unconscious for much of the book. For example, his worry about his wound, “What about my balls?” which brought out the best in Max, “Trust me, your balls are my utmost concern.” Even though Max seems to be a loner, and tries to keep a distance from the other sailors (as Max makes it clear she is in the Navy, and therefore not a soldier), it is clear that Grif likes her and respects her. There is a nice camaraderie between them and a loyalty. Amina was interesting in that she was a very strong character without ever turning into Rambo or a soldier like Rachel sort of does. Instead she watches over Grif and helps where she is needed. I wish there was a little more of both of them in the story.

One of the more interesting aspects of the book is the modern warfare. This is the first book that I have read with modern warfare as a main plot point. It is a completely different style of warfare than in previous decades and centuries, and the interactions are different. Max and her advice to Rachel help make it clear how psychologically jarring this style of war is. There were some really moving parts that Radclyffe wrote about war and how people deal with surviving. Max has to deal with the fact that bullets are fired randomly and there is no rhyme or reason on who is barely scratched and who is killed. Below is one of my favorite quotes from the story.

“The way she said it, as if for her life and death were indistinguishable, chilled Rachel's heart. Was this what war did, crushed emotions, obliterated the value of life? Or was it that in order to wage war, one must already have lost one's humanity?”

Overall I did enjoy the book, but after halfway, it really stopped being enjoyable for me. While the events that followed were presented in what is probably a more realistic way, it is not the best way to tell a story. I would have preferred more time in the jungle trying to survive, and less with what happens after.

Final Verdict: An okay summer read that started out great and petered off by the end.

Jordan says

Two stars? Three stars? I dunno. Radclyffe is pretty much my guilty pleasure. Formulaic yet somehow entertaining enough to make me read the books. Of course, that's kind of romance in general. You know that the two main characters are going to end up together in the end, so no surprises there. This was not bad overall, though there were a few lines that were so cheesy that they just were painful and at times it felt a little rushed and drawn out at the same time. Which is odd. But for example the whole issue with the CIA and placing blame for the attack just seems to vanish after taking up considerable time and creating lots of stress for the heroines. Which, I dunno, I felt like it either should have been left out or fully dealt with. But

once again, this is romance so I know I should probably just quit expecting much in the way of a deep plot.

Paige Braddock says

I just finished this book and really enjoyed it. Reading Radclyffe's personal intro to the book I realized that we have a lot in common in terms of our formative years of TV / Movies. And maybe this is why her books resonate with me. I watched a lot of westerns with my dad as a kid (and I mean, a lot!). One of my all time favorites, which had a big impact on me in terms of morality lessons was "The Big Country," with Gregory Peck. (As if his role as an early civil rights lawyer in the deep south in "To Kill a Mocking Bird" wasn't enough.) Anyway, Peck's character in the Big Country is an outsider, thrown into an environment where he has to prove his worth and manhood. The choices he makes in the movie and the ethical way he chooses to act in this harsh environment really stayed with me. A lot of Radclyffe's books carry this thread, clearly she was influenced by some of the same things I was... the sense of acting on behalf of others, honor, commitment to a cause in the face of adversity, and basically just being the sort of person/character who does the right thing, even when it puts you personally at risk. "Taking Fire" has all those aspects... with some great romantic chemistry thrown in. It's kind of fitting that I read this on July 4th weekend.

Gina says

Navy medic Max de Milles is trying to keep her mind off her impending return home from Africa as well as the horrors she has experienced on her tour abroad. She is selected as part of a team to extract a humanitarian group from an increasingly hostile situation. Red Cross volunteer, Rachel Winslow, is doing what she can to help the people of Somalia when she is informed of another's wish for her to be removed from the area, without her team. As area rebels advance on the Red Cross camp, Rachel and Max are thrown into a situation where their individual survival depends on each other.

I was looking forward to this book for months prior to its release. I have read most of Radclyffe's books and am a fan. And this book did not disappoint. It was a great mix of intrigue and romance that follows well with the other books in this series.

This book is a slow burn, with no explicit romantic endeavors happening until about halfway through. The first half of the book does not leave the reader wanting, however. The suspense and well written plot pushes the reader forward. I could not put it down once I started.

For me, the only part that was... lacking for want of a better word was the more romance intensive second half of the book. The erotic scenes were written with Radclyffe's usual flair. And I found them enjoyable, even relatable, as a reader. However, the whole thing felt rushed. The slow burn gave way to a bonfire. And the plot seemed too thin at this point. I wanted answers to questions raised earlier, and while some explanations were given, I just wanted more. Of what specifically, I cannot say.

Do not misunderstand. I absolutely loved the book. In some ways it reminded me of Radclyffe's Honor Series, which is a favorite of mine. But the jump from the plot intensive first half to the romance intense second was a little jarring.

I also wanted to say that I loved the shout-out to my alma mater, Iowa State, in the character of Grif. He

would have made Cyclone Nation proud.

Disclaimer: I received this book from NetGalley for this review.

Fin says

You know going in what you're going to get in a Radclyffe book.

Damaged Butch meets beautiful Femme. Instant attraction.

Filler, filler filler as they fall in love.

One or both behave in a manner you would associate with a teenager and not an adult to tease you that they may not get together.

Realization they cannot live without one another.

Happily ever after.

Despite that formula being repeated over and over, the book is still enjoyable. It's not blazing new trails but if you like Radclyffe, there's no reason you shouldn't expect to enjoy this book.

Two details that are irritating. The book is short, this publisher isn't putting out a book unless it's under 300 pages which means the story isn't as well developed as it could or probably should be and the proofreading is freaking terrible.

Ameliah Faith says

Radclyffe does it again!!

Taking Fire is the fourth in Radclyffe's First Responders series and for me a very long awaited and anticipated book!

In this installment, Max, a navy medic is charged with rescuing Rachel Windslow and other Red Cross workers from a band of rebels in war torn Somalia. Naturally things go to hell in relatively short time (which is good otherwise what's the point in the tale?). Who is this feisty woman, Rachel, what is SHE doing in the jungle and do they have any hope of rescue? What will happen when things go wrong, very, very wrong? Can Max learn to put her demons to rest and allow herself to feel again? Only time will tell.....

Like all the First Responder sagas, this one is filled with action, suspense, tension and drama. Our hero, Max, certainly proved she was worthy of her title and her place in this excellent series. I thoroughly enjoyed this book. My stomach was in knots and I could not breathe properly once the action started. I was so worried about our heroes that I absolutely could not stop reading any more than I could stop fidgeting in my seat!

It was a very hard book to put down, it was one that sucked you in and kept you captive while the story

unfolded around you. I loved the flaws and doubts and pain Max had. They made her so very real to me. So often the leads do not have to suffer, they are just heros from the word go for no real reason. This is not the case here, Max works hard for the title. Rachel had such optimism inspire of all she say and dealt with. She never seemed to give up hope or think she could not handle things when they got rough. Her strength was every bit as strong as Max's. They balanced each other without one over shadowing the other.

It was a wonderful read, worthy of the name Radclyffe!! Thank you so much for gracing us with another in the First Responder series.

This is a F/F Book

Originally reviewed With Prism Book Alliance

Velvet Lounger says

Radclyffe's "First Responder" series is turning out to be an excellent and powerful departure from her more traditional romances. Thoroughly enjoying the exploration of powerful women in difficult roles. This is by far the grittiest of Rad's output. There is a tension and suspense we don't get from the romances, however much we love them. The characters are full of strength and stubborn determination. Strong women in traditionally male jobs, role models, setting a standard as doctors, fire fighters and soldiers that any young woman would be proud to follow.

The charters of Max and Rachel draw us in. They are both powerful women who have chosen difficult and dangerous careers. They are stubborn, strong, loners in a crowd. They never ask for help, even when they need it. And they both fear failure more than anything. Powerful but flawed, they are extremely three dimensional. At times so alike, it is their very independent strength which balances them. Radclyffe often writes books based around the strong/weak, rich/poor dynamic where one character 'rescues' the other. Here, while the Max is the warrior and it is literally her job to rescue Rachel, the pair become mutually self-reliant and that allows a much more rounded interaction.

The plot is tense and interesting. Without wanting to give away any spoilers, just when you think the main adventure is over you notice you are only half way through, and another set of challenges pops up to keep the suspense moving. The setting is well done, the descriptions evocative and the heat of the jungle oozes off the page, along with the fear and resolve these women exude.

I have been critical in the past of Radclyffe producing too many repeats. This is an excellent change of pace, a well written and compelling read that puts her right back at the top of her game. It captured my attention from the start and kept it. Well done.

Macy Quirke says

It's weird b/c I feel like I should really like this book and there were some bits of it I liked, but... idk. it was a solid mid-lister for me, and I can't pinpoint why.

I'm going to start w/the good things. I really liked both characters. they seemed very well fleshed out and the research into their jobs, the location, their experiences, etc. seemed (mostly) very good. The one niggle I will mention later was very small and late in the book.

The chemistry b/t Max and Rachel was very well done. I absolutely believed the sparks b/t them, even in as tense and fraught a situation as they found themselves in.

My niggles with this are...(view spoiler)

RamenGrll says

As always, Radclyffe delivers fast-paced action with a healthy dose of romance. A quick read with detailed medical scenes (which I love) and imagery so vivid I was sweating right along with the characters. While I didn't love the book (because hey, I compare all of Rad's fiction to Fated Love, and that's a *very* high bar) it's still a solid romance and worth the read.

Megzz says

Maybe I've been reading too much of Radclyffe these past few days, but while I really liked the first 3 novels of this series, I feel like she missed the mark with this one.

Taking Fire really lacks inspiration. Both in terms of romance and in terms of action. Despite a plot that is supposed to be exciting, I felt really bored. The story is so slow, and there is absolutely nothing to look forward to. They spend a lot of time waiting for trouble to get to them. There is a lot of long paragraphs, a lack of dialogues and intimate scenes. The pace of the romance is completely off, and there's nothing of what I usually like in Radclyffe's stories: mainly, not much chemistry, and no slow build filled with temptation and desire. Yes, the connection is there between Max and Rachel, but it kind of gets drowned in the action surrounding them.

And don't get me started on how corny the last part of the book is. Oh my god, it made me cringe. Yes, Radclyffe writes hot sex. But I do not like sex scenes in which in between each kiss the girls feel the need to have a whole conversation saying things like "I never expected to feel this way about anyone", "I want to touch you forever", "You feel like noone I've ever touched", "I love the way you make me feel" (real quotes from the last chapter). They throw lines like this back and forth to each other, it's cheesy and annoying. I've read novels in which Radclyffe created much more subtle and delicate love stories.

I thought Max was a good character, an attractive hero. But I didn't really like Rachel, her stubbornness and naiveté got on my nerves.

Overall, really, it felt rushed. The whole story felt rushed, like Radclyffe couldn't wait to finish it. Or didn't

have time to think of a good, romantic story that feels believable. And maybe that's what happened.

P. Industry says

Let's not lie to ourselves here. If you're reading this review then you've already probably read a couple (if not a dozen) of Radclyffe's books. And that's okay. Shhhh, shhhh. Let me hold your hand. It's alright. Let's talk about this one, and somehow all of them at once.

Max de Milles is a Navy surgeon; Rachel Winslow is the all-American aid worker.

That bare statement should tell you everything you need to know about this novel. Team; she's written thirty novels that feature all manner of military and civilian heroes falling in love with the rich scions of politicians and industrialists. We should be on the same page here, yes? This one... this one is like a concentrated blend of Radclyffe though; like her formula was distilled to its essence this time. "Taking Fire" somehow encapsulates both why we should keep reading this author's novels, and also why I personally hate myself slightly as I do so.

Firstly, they are beautifully written, aren't they? "Taking Fire" is no exception to that. It's a relief to buy a novel you know has certain standards - both for BSB editing, which is uniformly excellent, and for the writing itself. It's like buying Starbucks; you know when you order exactly what you're going to get. If it's not the most new and amazing thing, hey, at least it's not going to be tragically awful either. "Taking Fire" is well paced, well plotted for its 200 or so pages, and entertaining throughout.

Some Radclyffe novels have really interesting characters. "Taking Fire" does not.

Characterisation is definitely a problem in this instance. Here we have a novel filled with forgettable, confused characters. Of the main two, our hero-serviceperson is Max - a Naval Officer (holy shit, a Lt. Com. no less!). She's also a surgeon, because of course she's a surgeon. Inexplicably and casually the highly trained and incredibly valuable surgeon is sent out as a medic for convoys in Afghanistan... somehow?? ((For the record, this job is what corpsmen are for, and they are trained for it like an EMT on steroids. A surgeon would be both hilariously expensive in this role, and inefficient - like having an emergency room doctor sitting around in an ambulance that might not even be used tonight. Plus, the Navy would never allow their resource to be put in danger by the Army like that.)) Whatever - okay, we need to give Max PTSD somehow, I get that. She'd have it anyway, but that's beside the point. Max went outside the wire for some bizarre reason, making her more legitimate as a war hero, and now has PTSD.

In this same vein, WTF why did Max get sent out on a top-secret helicopter mission into the bush to rescue Rachel??! What part of "Navy Surgeon" screams "obvious choice for secret Army helicopter assault/extraction"?

Skip over the next couple of paragraph if you don't want more ranting in this vein.
(view spoiler)

Rant closed. I promise. Back to the review.

Rachel. I sigh. I should talk about Rachel. Okay. Here we go. So Radclyffe has this thing where one of the two lesbians is kinda more butch than the other. You know? One kind of takes charge and then solves the problem through the intensity of their gaze. That's fine; hey, my own girl has an intense gaze that could strip off paint, and it works just as well stripping off my clothes. I ain't even mad bro. But the other lesbian in the couple kind of sucks. Radclyffe tries really hard; she makes them somehow noble and idealistic, giving them... something. You know? She tries. And you know, she succeeds quite a lot; fighting forest fires, or being badass undercover agents. Sometimes Radclyffe fails and the fem lady just sits at home and angsts over her hero lover. Here Raddy definitely fails. "Taking Fire" has Rachel as a damsel in the worst way - important because of her family, somehow needing rescue, and then many of her problems are solved by all-American sex.

The all-American sex thing is kinda weird - it replaces things like... maybe the two people being friends. Max and Rachel don't actually seem to like each other, or themselves either. And the sex sounds really uncomfortable, talking as, you know, someone who has frequent lesbian sex. And kinda short.

You know, I wouldn't even be mad at any of these problems if everyone wasn't as serious as TB; these characters never laughed at all, or if they did then it was mirthlessly and over the emptiness of their bleak existence. Max is so serious *all the time*. It is like Days of Our Lives except without the sly self-awareness. I want one of these lesbians to pratfall leaving a CLU. Or Rachel to knee Max while having sex. Or Max to make a terrible pun, or giggle like an idiot, or do any of the dozen little things which make a person warm and alive to their partner.

So; so. We've got flawed stereotypes, terrible misunderstandings about military structures (and defensive positions), all wrapped in a fantastically written package and delivered in an easily digestible format. Look; we both know you know what you're in for if you buy this book. It's not as good as her other ones, but it's still going to entertain you before you sleep, or make you feel moderately uncomfortable as you read it on the bus.

No dramas.

Wendy Simpson says

Wow!

This had me on my toes. I love the development of the characters. As a soldier it was relatable and a bit out of body experience for me. Being deployed is never easy. Especially when you have family that you've left behind. It's gut wrenching. Anyways, this was a page turner for me. I loved that both the main characters were so solid. I loved it!

Jessica says

Thrilling, heart wrenching but oh so romantic. Perfect as always Radclyffe!

