



Josie

Vivian Schurfranz

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Fifteen-year-old Josie longs for romance and adventure but ignores kind James, head of the Carson City Pony Express. When Mike, a dashing new rider, joins the Express, Josie thinks she has found her true love. But an encounter with a notorious woman outlaw shows her the dark side of adventure.

Josie Details

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From Reader Review Josie for online ebook

Edallia says

I read *Josie* and *Megan* in one sitting, in an attempt to get through the Schurfranz and get back to the good Sunfires. I think they are the same book. Or maybe that was the other Schurfranz book. I'm a little punchy at this point in the Sunfire Re-Read, so bear with me.

Josie Gaits, 16, kind of short, lives in Carson City, Nevada and has been keeping house and raising her younger siblings since her mother's death. Her brother Tim is a Pony Express rider and her boyfriend James Donley runs the dispatch station. James hires a cowboy named Mike Bradman as an Express rider. Josie has been forced to grow up too fast and longs for adventure. Mike wants to deliver.

Josie possesses the superhuman abilities of most Schurfranz heroines, so she is naturally able to tame a wild Appaloosa that even the cruelest cowboy couldn't break. And when disaster strikes the Pony Express run, Josie gets a chance to run the mail through herself. This is one of those Sunfires where the entire plot is given away on the cover blurb, so I will go on and trumpet the whole encounter with a female outlaw who gives Josie "woman to woman advice about love."

Um, no she doesn't. At least, I didn't notice it. It was probably a few platitudes thrown in amongst the bandit's life story. Something like "don't rush into anything." Wow, thanks, woman outlaw!

In fact, I am not entirely sure *why* the outlaws kidnapped Josie in the first place. She didn't stumble into their hideout, she didn't see them at all, she didn't even ride by their camp. They saw her from a distance and chased her down and held her because... they were going to rob a stage the next day. Which they told her. Which Josie wouldn't have known at all if they hadn't chased her down, tied her up and *told her.* It's a giant, gaping plot hole and the entire story basically sinks down into it at that point.

The research is obviously so exhaustively well-done... and once again, Schurfranz can't bear to leave out a single tiny fragment she gleaned while researching the time period. She falls back on her regrettable device of including long extracts from speeches and newspaper articles of the time, which gives her novel the air of a panicked student's last minute term paper, all padded out with irrelevant long quotes. General McClellan's letter to the Western soldiers and the poem "Riding on the Stage" are particularly out of place. They really tear the reader away from the focus of the novel. Which is the Pony Express, in case we forgot, and which is interesting enough in and of itself.

The romantic plot is such a repeat that it barely registers, and Josie herself is indistinguishable from the army of Schurfranz heroines. She tells James that she doesn't want to be serious or think of marriage- and then she immediately becomes serious with Mike. This disingenuous little maneuver leads us into an entire book of vacillation between the beaux, only to have the heroine choose the longtime steady, who's just been waiting for the heroine to forget her silly notions of not marrying the guy her family expects her to marry.

I also find myself really disappointed in the message of this story. Josie makes her ride, determined to prove something ... and then she doesn't do it. Her horse runs on without her after she's captured. Although they pat her on the back and tell her she did it, she DIDN'T DO IT. And then she decides to stay in Carson City and marry the boring guy and never long for adventure again! A woman's place is in the home! She really *can't* do things a man can do! I know that's not the message Schurfranz intended to convey, but that's what came through on the page. Especially since the major reason we're manipulated into disliking Mike is because he's

not very good with kids. Sorry, but I can't blame him there. Josie seems to expect him to become an instant daddy figure to her little brother and sister.

And why can't Schurfranz make the losing suitor a decent guy in his own right? She's always got to choose one to demonize, and one to exalt, therefore the heroine's "choice" boils down to one moment of "finally" realizing that one guy is a jerk, even though he's been acting like a jerk for the entire story. Why can't each suitor simply represent a path to be taken in life, thus making the choice more about what the heroine wants for herself? This "love story" is terribly unsatisfying.

Verdict: Schurfranz is phoning it in at this point, assuming she was ever there in person to begin with. Only for completists.

Reading with Cats says

Ugh. Absolute dreck. Skimmed most of this awful thing.

Sharon says

I wish I had a scale of 1-10 to rate books, because 1 is too low and 2 is too high. But 1 might only be too low because of nostalgia. Sigh. I rarely find a book too juvenile for me--Bear Snores On, There's a Wocket in My Pocket, The Babysitter's Club #7: Claudia and Mean Janine (yes, I pulled that off the top of my head). This book, however, is just too juvenile. Sigh. Hard facts, 1; Nostalgia, 0.

Shelley says

One of the worst Sunfires out there. Seriously over the top bizarre actions and drama. The historical event is the Pony Express, with bonus kidnapping.

Cindy says

I originally read this series back in the 80s, checking them out from my elementary school library. Having re-read them as an adult I think they stand the test of time and are still relevant as far as historical fiction is concerned.

Abby says

I brought out an old box of books for my daughter the other day and found a whole bunch of my teenage favs, the Sunfire series. I decided to wax nostalgic and read them all again. I have always been a sucker for YA romance! These books are set in a momentous historical time period, feature a young women coming of age, and two love interests. Who will she choose? Will she survive the threats of the given time period? Lots

of great fun for a young teenage reader (or mother of three). Darcy is about the Pony express. I did find the facts about the express interesting but I could easily see which beau she was going to choose. Safe and steady for Josie, even though she does have her adventure in the Nevada desert.

Shelly says

I am reading/rereading all the Sunfires. I almost liked this as a historical, but the romance stunk. I wonder if I would have liked it at age 12? Maybe, but it would not have been my favorite in this seriesm

Haylie says

This is a great book to read if you have some extra time, it has the perfect balance of romance, suspence, and myserty. Very cool.

Katherine says

A good Read, though extremely predictable. Set in Carson City during the era of telegraph lines and the pony express, it added some variety to the common prairie fiction.

Sidney Stout says

Please remember these books are for the young girl not really written for adults but as a teen this was my absolute favorite book, not sure why but I seriously about had the whole thing memorized, sure its not a deep book but I loved it and its perfect for your young teen that you want to keep away from the more smutty romance books and they can learn a little about the pony express in the mean time!!

Karla says

If this is the first Sunfire book by Vivian Schurfranz you've read, then you're bound to like it, or at least think it's ok. If, like me, this is one of the last, you already know what's going to happen, and when, before you even open it up.

To wit: Girl longs for adventure in boring town. Girl has Solid & Reliable Boyfriend whom she believes she loves. But...Dashing & Exciting Boy comes into her life and she immediately forgets Boyfriend #1 because Mr. Dashy is "confident" (i.e., a brash asshat) and "so handsome!" (and arrogantly knows it). That is, until the next chapter, where Boyfriend #1 does something Nice & Considerate, and she finds herself Torn Between Two Lovers for the next several chapters. Schurfranz' heroines literally seesaw between two boys for pages upon pages for the stupidest of reasons, driving the poor reader bugnuts. Schurfranz always gives her heroine Something That Others Cannot Do, which she attempts with differing degrees of success, and that usually creates a Moment Of Truth for the two boyfriends. Depending on how they treat the heroine in

Her Moment of Triumph, the heroine has an epiphany in the last two pages and she goes with the same type of boy Schurfranz always has her heroines choose. G'wan....GUESS which one!

The review here by Edallia pretty much says it all. I have rarely enjoyed a Schurfranz Sunfire - I think Danielle was the only one I marginally enjoyed. Perhaps because it was the first one of hers I read and I had no idea she had one formula and never deviated from it. Her entries and Ransom's Nicole have been the worst of a very uneven series. Why can't all of them be like Jennie or Darcy? *sigh*
