



# **Always in My Heart**

*Catherine Anderson*

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Two years ago, Ellie Grant would have fallen apart at any reminder of her ex-husband, Tucker. But now she doesn't bat an eye when "their song" comes on the radio. She's unfazed by the thought of Tucker's perky new girlfriend. Ellie Grant is over him. And things are better for Tucker as well. The single life agrees with him. And certainly they've both done a good job of being civil to each other, for the kids' sake.

But the kids aren't buying it. Zach and Kody are convinced that deep down, their parents are still meant to be together. Up to their elbows in scheming and dreaming, the brothers hatch a plan. They'll run away from home into the Oregon wilderness and stay there until their parents agree to get back together. Surely Ellie and Tucker will come to the rescue --- and to their senses.

Let the games begin and the sparks fly ...

## **Always in My Heart Details**

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# From Reader Review Always in My Heart for online ebook

## Sara says

This book reminds me of one of those unrealistically perfect Hallmark movies with a tiny bit of Lifetime thrown in there. Giant tragedy strikes a family and tears husband and wife apart, but after a few days in the wilderness they're back in each other's arms and it was like the divorce never happened. Kids pull a stunt that nearly gets one of them killed near the end, their wacky plan *works* and they don't even get a slap on the wrist. Love interests that mainly serve as plot devices to drive the point home that the couple was so meant to be, and an epilogue so sappy and cheesy it'd make maple syrup taste bitter.

But I liked it. God help me, I actually liked this one. If there was ever a book to read for the sheer guilty pleasure of it, this is it. The characters aren't terribly written, but they're not especially gripping either. The plot is just one big brochure for the Great Outdoors with some Wilderness Survival Guide tossed in there. The female love interest being Obviously a Bad Person made me bristle, and the male love interest poking the heroine in the chest being treated like ultraviolence was just laughable. The backstory of Ellie and Tucker's divorce following the death of their oldest son skirted a line between genuine tearjerker and maudlin melodrama. And I quite disliked the implication that "normal" kids don't ever write in notebooks. I get that it was trying to say "Kody's depressed, so he doesn't do things he used to like and spends his time mindlessly watching TV and internalizing his feelings in a notebook", but it could've been dealt with MUCH better. As a woman who's been writing in notebooks since she was eight years old, I took offense to that. :P

But I just kept reading, and when the perfect happy ending came I was satisfied. If "Sweet Nothings" and "Sun Kissed" brought out the cynical complainer in me, this one brought out the sap who craves happy endings.

This one also stands out from Catherine's usual fare by having the couple already having been together. Their main obstacle is working through the bad feelings and trying to re-ignite the spark. Tucker isn't as much of a cowboy as Catherine's other heroes, and Ellie isn't the standard "her private hell: the insert name here story" as Catherine's other heroines. There's no Villain Ex Machina or gratuitous rescue scenes to eyeroll at. But aside from that you can tell it's an Anderson book, from the settings to the dialogue.

It's far from perfect. It's unrealistic as hell. But I'll gladly curl up with it on a rainy day and get lost in the cheesiness.

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## ~Nichole~ Sizzling Pages Romance Reviews says

Another emotional yet beautiful and healing second chance story from my new favorite author. There's nothing more traumatic than what this couple went through. To get past all the pain, guilt and shame they had to literally climb a mountain. I cried so many tears for every character. True love like this is why I read. Very happy epilogue.

Safe with exceptions. They were each others one and only.

Divorced for 3 years Ellie and Tucker were both celibate. They both had recently started dating due to their sons lying to them saying each other were dating people to try to make them jealous. But neither went past kissing and actually Tucker hasn't even done that until this trip to go after the kids. His "very casual platonic to this point date" Liz is threatened by Ellie so she throws herself at Tucker at the campsite.. Rubs on him and kisses him and makes sexual advances and movements. His body responds but he's disgusted and not interested and turns her down nicely.. Even though it's been 3 yrs for him and his ex wife is there with another man. I don't like ow scenes but I totally understand his body's response and most importantly that his heart pushed him away. He's the first one to realize the next day he's still deep in love with Ellie and he goes after her heart again. Both the guy and Liz are gone by day 2 or 3.

The other non safety triggers are death of child and survival guilt.

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### Cc says

There is NO cheating or betrayal in this book! I do not understand some reviewers taglines at all. Ok, mini rant over. Well written, if somewhat over dramatic second chance love story after the loss of a child. I didn't see any triggers and the death of child is treated with all the respect it demands. The fact that the kids had to resort to this to get thier parents to speak to one another really highlighted the immaturity of said parents. I didn't enjoy this, hence only 2 stars. But.... I will say that personal experiences may have colored my perception, may have.....but I don't think so, those two were really childish themselves. To each her own.

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### Ess Kay says

I loved reading this book!! It had angst, legitimate reasons as to why the marriage didn't work and very mature for their age kids (lol). I feel like it would have been five stars had it not dragged a bit. I believe it could have been wrapped up a bit faster and also I would have liked to read more from children's point of view once the conflict is resolved and their plan actually works. But overall great read!

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### ★, • \* ° \* ?\*Blanka\*?\*°°\*•, . ♥★ says

*Two years ago, Ellie Grant would have fallen apart at any reminder of her ex-husband, Tucker. But now she doesn't bat an eye when "their song" comes on the radio. She's unfazed by the thought of Tucker's perky new girlfriend. Ellie Grant is over him. And things are better for Tucker as well. The single life agrees with him. And certainly they've both done a good job of being civil to each other, for their sons' sake.*

*But the kids aren't buying it. Zach and Kody are convinced that, deep down, their parents are still meant to be together. Up to their elbows in scheming and dreaming, the brothers hatch a plan: They'll run away from home into the Oregon wilderness and stay there until their parents agree to get back together. Surely Ellie and Tucker will come to the rescue--and to their senses.*

*Let the games begin and the sparks fly...*

**Tucker and Ellie have grown up together, they were high school sweethearts..then they married and had three children. However the death one of those children was too much for both of them so they ended divorced.. they are miserable apart but too much time has passed until their two remaining sons make a plan of running away to reunite the two parents.. what could go wrong? Everything! It was a sad emotionally gripping book, but I enjoyed each page**

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### **Debby says**

Ellie Grant and her ex-husband Tucker divorced 2 years ago when their oldest son was killed in an accident. Both felt guilty for his death but thought the other blamed them. Their two other sons, Zach and Kody are struggling with the loss of their brother, the divorce, and the move from Bend to Springfield, OR. Tucker, a wildlife biologist, is a back-to-nature guy and has taught the boys great wilderness survival skills. In an attempt to get their parents back together, the boys bike to the Baxter wilderness area and leave a note telling their parents they'll have to come find them and that they won't come back until they've reconciled. Tucker and Ellie both show up with their current dates in tow, but that doesn't last long once they start tracking the boys. Ellie and Tucker are united by their love of the boys and have to spend time together on the trail. Once they finally talk to each other, the love comes rushing back, but they still need to find the boys who are leading them on a serious chase. Eventually everything works out. Unusual story. Well done.

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### **Maggie Shanley says**

Catherine Anderson never fails to elicit an emotional reaction. Perhaps not the best choice to take to the Doctor's office today...he came into the exam room while I was wiping my eyes and prepared to increase my medicine! This book starts off kind of amusing but then gets intense as Ellie and Tucker Grant, divorced parents of boys, go off to find their runaway kids in an Oregon wilderness. The whole family collapsed when Sammy the eldest child died three years ago, now to get their parents attention Kody and Zach runaway and lead their parents on a trip down memory lane in hopes of bringing their family back together again.

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### **Rashika (is tired) says**

Are you sure the main characters are in their 30s because in that case I am probably in my 50s.

I have no idea how those kids came up with a plan like that... I feel stupid.

And.. wow.... how good could their relationship be if they faced so many communication problems? I do not understand.

I am confused.

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## Catherine says

After starting this book, I was almost positive that I wouldn't like it. The heroine, Ellie, seemed like a bitter ex-wife who was trying to play at being a martyr-mom. Everything she did was for her kids. She lived and breathed solely to be there for them and never thought of herself. Her whole life was for them and she was critical of her ex for not being as dedicated as she was. She apparently hadn't even been able to shave in two weeks because the time she'd waste on that was precious time she could have been spending on her kids.

*\*excuse me while I take a moment to gag\** Right then and there, it's a good bet that I'm already on the ex's side. I just met her and even I couldn't stand her!

But I soon saw that the author set her up like that very deliberately. This was a woman who had suffered in life and who was overcompensating for something quite tragic. She and her ex, Tucker, split up after the loss of one of their sons, and they both reacted to it in very different ways. Their changes in behavior were sad indications of the loss they had suffered and the emotional upheaval that it caused. Not only did they lose a son, they lost each other. Their attitudes didn't always make them likable (mostly Ellie), but it did make their slow change feel more authentic for being so hard won.

Ellie and Tucker have both disliked each other since their divorce. They blame each other for certain things and they both suffer from feelings of guilt and inadequacy that they can't seem to deal with, beyond turning it into anger at each other. They've been divorced for three years and have avoided speaking to each other entirely for the last year. Their kids have become very unhappy and they can feel that the point of no return is coming. They decide to take drastic measures and run away.

Ellie and Tucker, along with their current love interests, mount a search for the kids, but at first they can't seem to do anything but fight and play the blame game. This made their relationship feel more real, but it's constant nature occasionally made me grit my teeth. Their journey to find their kids finally forced them into each other's company long enough to admit that they're not over each other. They finally had to deal with all the messed up emotions they've been hiding inside. It was a painful process, but it unfolded well.

One of the things that always makes me nervous about second-chance-romances is fearing that the author will take the characters too far. I love that trope, but I want to be able to feel good about them getting together. I need to believe that they can recover from the wrongs they have dealt each other. That means walking a fine line when writing their reasons for breaking up and the way they've treated each other since. I'm happy to say that *Anderson* nailed this. The reader could sympathize with *both* of them over their reasons for breaking up, but it was also apparent that they really belonged together. They needed time and distance to get over some genuinely heartbreaking things, but in the end the only one that made them truly happy was each other.

The book focuses around the search for their missing children and takes place over a relatively short period of time. The pacing was well done and I never felt like things were going too quickly to be believable. The only thing that bothered me, other than a few irritants now and again, was the fact that the kids ran away and put their parents through that and never really had any internalization of how wrong they were to behave that way. It's like the fact that Ellie and Tucker got back together cancelled out the punishment that *I* think they deserved. I think their complaints were completely valid, but that was a crappy thing of them to do.

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### Francette says

Wanted to read and finish this book because I love old school angst and this book was promising it strong. But!!!when 10% in the obvious female villain was trying to force the H into sex when they were on a search for his runaway kids and he didn't use that very obvious reason to turn her off?? Um, my kids are missing in the forest. Their mommy is here. The last thing I am going to do is initiate sex with you on DAY ONE OF THE SEARCH. That he even feels bad for turning her down at this point is ridiculous. He should be disgusted by her or at least questioning her timing. She needs to hit on him now? And he's such a douche that he doesn't call her off for her timing?? I don't care what happens after; be enough of a human to tell her she's out of line to try to fuck you right one of your missing child search.

Okay, I went back for more because it's considered such a classic. And I love bad angst. And then it sucked again. Why the fuck is he shaving? You've been in the woods one day to find your kids and you need to shave? Is there any amount of days you'd be tracking your lost kids in the wood and you'd think you'd need time to stop and shave? And that you actually brought shaving gear when you set out to save your kids? Oh, and he also has astringent to slap on his jaw.

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### Nerissa says

well written. Good plot. Good characters. Bit boring at times.

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### Maria says

A heart-wrencher, this book had me crying and laughing and pulling wholeheartedly for all the characters in this family of four. If you enjoy backpacking as I do, that was an added plus.

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### Lara says

I see what she was trying to do here, but there are so many contrived details going into this story that it avalanches from sweet to desperately sappy to "Nicholas Sparks thinks this is overdone". Both Tucker and Ellie are dating people completely and utterly *wrong* for them, (this is classic CA, you don't just date and/or marry someone who's not your type, you date someone who is horrible in every way just so your True Love will look even better when they show up), and the passive-aggressive sniping doesn't make anyone look good. The two little boys are freaking adorable, and we're forced to view them as such even when they're running away into the woods to try and reconcile their parents and incidentally scaring the crap out of said parents. The deceased child is painted as perfect, bordering on too-good-for-this-sinful-earth. And I'm sorry, but the presence of a convenient hot spring right when Tucker and Ellie are admitting that they still care for each other?

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## **Jennifer Defoy says**

I did like this book, but it took me forever to read. It was almost the end of the book before I got "hooked". The writing was good enough to keep me going, and the story itself was pretty good I just couldn't get into the groove with this one.

I can't even imagine being in Ellie's position. How she managed to keep going, given everything that she's been through was a feat in itself. Then to have to deal with her kid's hair brained plan... There would be two sorry kids if that was me. At the beginning of the book I was thinking, well they're just acting out, but by the end of the book all I could think was these kids need to be flogged!

But the love story between Ellie and Tucker was enough to keep me reading. There was one point when I was kind of scared for them. I wasn't really expecting there to be a sense of fear in the story. There were so many emotions worked into it. I think the mix of emotions was what really kept me reading.

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## **Booklover says**

Completed this book today must say such a beautiful story of giving love a second chance,a try to re-build the family that is broken after a tragedy followed by divorce

Tucker and Ellie Grant divorced after the death of their oldest son, whom each felt guilt and blame over the tragic accident that killed him. 3 years later, the two remaining sons, run away into the mountains refusing to come back until their parents get back together, forcing Tucker and Ellie to spend time together tracking the boys to the place where they used to camp as a family. All along the way, they fight their old feelings, and discover some unknown truths about each other and thier family.....This story has some highly emotional moments which is the strength of the book.

Absolutely LOVED Tucker-Ellie's love how they fall in love get married n how the accident that killed their first born son Sammy shatters them,the anger,accusations,,guity,bitterness ,divorce

Loved Zach-Kody their twin sons that make their parents realise how they are miserable n what they feel n their plans to make their parents fall in love again finally how they are successful

This is an excellent book with very well developed characters.  
Absolutely recommend it

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## **Genieve Ong says**

**A very vexing story and heroine!!!**

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## **Brenda says**

A beautifully written story.A family tore apart by the death of their son.Having lost a brother I know that this



can and does happen. I really connected with this story. Made me laugh, cry and wanna scream.. Tucker and Ellie loved each other, But couldn't stop blaming themselves. Their 2 sons take matters into their own hands..

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### **Liz says**

I loved this book. I got so attached to the characters. I hurt, cried, laughed and loved right along with them. I loved this book so much I'm going to start reading more of Catherine Anderson's books. What a wonderful read, I couldn't put it down. Having children myself made this book even more enjoyable.

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### **Sheri says**

This is a wonderful book. The best of those I've read by this author.

Elle and Tucker are each other's one and only. They were each other's first and remained deeply in love and committed until the accidental death of their oldest child. The story opens three years after the death. Tucker and Elle are divorced and their family fractured. Individually just beginning to come to terms with their grief, neither realize their two sons' lives are falling apart.

The kids decide to get mom and dad back together and fix the mess. They take off into the wilderness, hoping the forced proximity as the parents search for their kids will bring them back together. BTW, dad is a wilderness expert and he's taught the boys well.

The first part of the book is rife with humor. I loved all the characters, most especially Tucker. A lot happens on the wilderness trek. Tucker and Elle open up for the first time. They share, understand, forgive, and start anew. Then they're confronted with two major crises.

I found the whole story touching, the way Anderson deals with the emotional issues sensitive. It's a satisfying story. Statistically, it's pretty common for marriages to end in divorce after the death of a child. I felt Anderson dealt with it all realistically.

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### **Dinjolina says**

I love this book!

I just did a re-read of it, and realized I was still in love with it.

Oh and a big Hoorah! for the author that did not make the hero go around the block after his divorce. The premises that this couple only had each other in their beds all their lives made me smile a sappy smile because it never happens in cont romances.

Good for you to think out of the box, Mrs. Author. :)

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