



## Only In My Arms

*Jo Goodman*

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*Jo Goodman introduced the incomparable Dennehy Women—five sisters with a passion for life and love. In Only In My Arms, she concludes her enchanting series with the unforgettable Mary Frances Dennehy, a woman torn between a steadfast faith and a passionate love...*

**A man about to die...**

**A woman ready to live...**

Torn between devotion and a secret yearning for adventure and fulfillment, Mary Frances Dennehy makes her choice. Shocking her family, she leaves the convent and her cloistered existence behind and sets out in search of a new life. But for a woman alone, the West can be a hostile and treacherous place. And no one is in more dangerous—and irresistible—than Ryder McKay.

Faithful to the Apaches who raised him, now sentenced to hang for a crime he didn't commit, Ryder is desperate enough to seize one last chance for freedom. Taking Mary Dennehy hostage, the army scout plots his daring escape into the mountains only to find himself with a woman he never expected, one who makes him feel fully alive and hungry for more. Now, with danger closing in, a breathtaking bid for freedom becomes a journey into forbidden passion that will test two lovers' faith and challenge their hearts.

## Only In My Arms Details

Date : Published December 1st 2004 by Zebra (first published 1997)

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Author : Jo Goodman

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### **Zoe says**

This is the last book in the series, featuring Mary Francis and Ryder McKay. Mary Francis has been a very interesting character in the series. Her being a nun for most of the series, I had assumed that there wouldn't be a story for her. The book opened with Ryder happened upon Mary in her parents' summerhouse. The setting was private and left an impression in both of their minds. The second time they met was under more unfortunate circumstances. Ryder was accused of rape and treason, which were both untrue. He abducted Mary to save his neck. They hid in a cave for the major part of the story and that is where they got to know each other. The "mystery" element in this book was how and why Ryder was set up in the crimes he was accused of and how they came about exonerating him.

As intriguing as Mary's character was in the beginning, she shedded her nun habit and somehow she became "just another romance heroine". Because Jo Goodman wrote her, she was not immature or childish. But I was not able to establish some kind of connection with her. I also did not find Ryder all that exciting. It was a slow moving romance but because of Jo Goodman's writing I followed them to their happy ending. Like most of the Jo Goodman stories, the lead characters usually make their showdown somewhere around 70% , reconcile an close ranks on the external threats. This is another solid entry of Jo Goodman's books.

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### **Joanna Loves Reading says**

Read this book for the romance, which was quite beautiful and lovely. The hero and heroine are each other's champion, their other half to make them whole. The romance was very well crafted and told. The subplot is less so, and is the weakest part of the story.

I used to enjoy reading Western novels. I read many by Larry McMurtry and read quite a few Christian Historical Romance Westerns also years ago, but for some reason I have been hesitant to venture into Historical Romance Westerns. I think my hesitation stems from the idea that the harsh and unforgiving Old West would not provide a romantic back drop, but it really did here. I will be checking out more in the genre, thanks to the recs from my GR friends! This was read as a buddy read in the Romance Book Buddy Reading group at <https://www.goodreads.com/topic/show/...>, and I am also counting it for my Western category (that I planned to skip) I the Historical Romance Book Club Romance Across the Ages challenge.

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### **Cecy says**

4.5

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### **Jacky Faber says**

I started book #5 of the series instead of starting with #1. I love the character of Mary Francis. Smart, courageous, strong willed, resourceful, loving, passionate. A great heroine. I did think she was too worldly

after being a nun since she was 17 and she left her order when she was 30. What I did like was Mary Francis was as tough and stubborn as Ryder Mackay. She didn't let him push her around too much. That is what I didn't like about the hero, Ryder. He was too bossy. I also, didn't think he behaved especially as an Apache. Supposedly he was raised as an Apache but in my mind, he didn't particularly act like one.

I also didn't understand why they spent so much time in the Cave of Lost Souls. It was obvious to me they couldn't stay there forever. It seemed Ryder didn't have a plan as to how to clear his name. He only looked at maps of the area. The author took way too long to get the action going. She used a lot of the first half of the book to solidify the relationship between Mary Francis and Ryder. She could have incorporated the building relationship with them trying to clear Ryder's name earlier in the book. The novel was good but it could have used some editing.

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### **Ashley says**

This was the first "Mary" book I've read, I know started on the last but nevertheless the book was alright. I was so confused at first because the first chapter ended so abruptly I spent the next hundred pages figuring why that was so important until Mary went to fort union. I didn't like that he never said those three little words we all love to hear even though he very much expressed it. I also would have enjoyed a scene of Mary telling Ryder that she was pregnant. The other stories about Mary I wish I read first I fell in love with all of them with very little I knew about them. Over all good read but much better if you read the previous four

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### **Wendy Tavenner says**

I absolutely loved this book!!! The 5th in the series and it's sad to be ending!!! Mary decides she needs time alone to reflect on her life!! She then meets Ryder McKay and it changes her life!! Months later Ryder is accused of a grieves crime, put on trial, found guilty and is going to hang!! Ryder sets Mary up and has her help him escape!!! They escape, go into hiding and they try and find out who set Ryder up!! You have adventure, intrigue, twists and turns, love, and redemption all wrapped up in a wonderful book!!! Can't wait to read more from Jo Goodman!!

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### **Darlene says**

I confess, I was not expecting a story about the 5th sister whose title *is* "Sister". Mary Francis, the oldest child, knows now life holds a different direction for her and she leaves the convent she's been a part of since she became an adult.

Goodman handled her transition from being part of a religious order to the world with skill, and she crafted for Mary Francis a hero who's up to her weight. Ryder considers himself both Apache and white. Raised by the Apache, he now serves as a scout for the US Army. When he's accused of a crime he didn't commit, it's Mary Francis who stands by him.

The story is a satisfying conclusion to the Dennehy Sisters series, and as always, a satisfying read from an experienced and skilled author. I'm glad much of Ms. Goodman's backlist is now available in ebook editions.

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## Jill Dunlop says

*Only in My Arms* is the fifth book in the Dennehy Sisters series. Mary Dennehy is at a point in her life when she realizes that being a nun is not the right path for her. She struggles with the decision but she decides to leave the convent and live a normal life. She wants to teach out west. Her sister is already there and so she journeys to Arizona. The West is not safe because Apache Indians are constantly raiding the area. One such raid has led to a man who was sentenced to hang. In his desperation he kidnaps Mary when he escapes.

I happen to really like Jo Goodman. Not only does she weave a good tale but, her characters are vivid and her writing lilting and lovely. I think *Only in My Arms* might be my favorite by her thus far. The two main characters Mary and Ryder are just wonderful, wonderful people. Both are so incredibly strong-willed with truly good hearts. It would be impossible not to fall in love with them. Both are so stubborn they butt heads a lot over the course of the book. Yet, it is really fascinating to read and see what the outcome of these disagreements is and who the victor will be. You might even be surprised.

This book is chock full of wonderful passages. If you follow my blog you may have already gotten a glimpse at one of them, through my "[a href="http://romancerookie.blogspot.com/201... the Book[/a:]" post. I had a half of dozen great scenes to choose from and it was not easy to decide among them. I have not read all the books in this series and I do not feel that it is necessary to have read them to enjoy this book. But I do wager that after reading this book, you will want to go out and read the others.

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## Susy says

Resolving the central mystery of this novel salvaged the second half of the novel and consequently the rating a bit, but overall I disliked it. (See below for "progress update" thoughts.

This was just a sloppily written novel. I am sure the author did research--apparently on Apache tribes, language, culture and rivalries, and also seemingly on geography. But when it came to the Roman Catholicism faith of the main characters (except Ryder), Goodman decided to just wing it. I find this both insulting and insurmountable as a flaw.

To sum up one of these, what others may consider a quibble, but which is a glaring error: no committed RC family would ever ever ever believe being married by a judge to a legitimate marriage. To a Catholic, it is just as empty and meaningless as standing in a tub of water in front of your parents. (The Apache marriage ceremony) This supposedly deeply faithful woman is still living sinfully outside of marriage.

So basically the author takes the heroine and overlays some gloss of Catholicism over her. "She's a nun. She wears a habit and uh, has a rosary. She's Irish. She's really Catholic. Did I mention she's a nun?"

Meh. The mystery was ok. I skipped over all the sex scenes because I simply did not care. I did not much like the hero. Mary the heroine was okay even if her characterization was all wrong. The opening of the book was fantastic but was all downhill from there.

At least I finished the dumb book. I did not expect I would be able to.

## PROGRESS UPDATE

55% into the book, I tried to capture my thoughts in Progress update but it was too long. So here is what I am thinking at halfway mark. 4/24/16

Reading another romance on the road. (I have shelves of these I bought during The Great Romance Reading Project of 2013.)

The previous Jo Goodman I read was fantastic. This one--not so much. Set in Arizona in 1880s. I enjoyed first part. I like the heroine. Now it is bogging down in middle and I find the actions of the characters to be inscrutable at best and ridiculously inconsistent at worst. Pity because the previous Goodman book I actually praised the author for having her flawed characters react in ways that were true to their (flawed) natures. I hate inconsistency in characterization.

My guess is that Goodman is writing about an RC nun without actually knowing anything about Roman Catholicism. There is no way that a nun who left her order because she felt it was God's call to her (so being obedient to God) would then abandon morals, scruples and chastity. Maybe a lay Catholic bc in general we have been and remain relatively unformed (and uninformed) in our faith. But a woman religious who has taken vows and served for 13 years, no way.

If the author had indicated that Mary the heroine had lost her faith...I would find that distasteful but her actions would be consistent.

Anyhoo... This may end up as a DNF bc I am offended as a reader and as a Catholic and at this point I dislike the hero. And the decisions do not make sense. Bizarre

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### **Stephanie (Jump) says**

4 stars

An enthralling storyline that kept me reading, but when all said and done I felt there wasn't enough good, meaningful conversations between the couple. The author gave the main characters these strong emotions, but I wish I could believe it more by seeing it more to give this book a full 5 stars.

There was a lot of believable attraction but I needed more of them bonding and getting to know each other on a deeper level.

When they first met years ago they didn't really have meaningful conversations to warrant all the strong feelings they supposedly had. There was definitely believable lust, but not sure about anything deeper. The hero caught her in a vulnerable moment but there wasn't a lot of talking and sharing. He did hold her to comfort her and proved he was honorable by not taking advantage of the situation, but I can't seem to think that could warrant such a reaction later on, for either of them.

Then after he broke out of jail and kidnapped her, there were still a lot of antagonism and not a lot of good meaningful conversations. Even later after they had married then for godsakes (view spoiler)

### **At A Glance**

Safety warnings(view spoiler)

HEA (view spoiler)

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### **WhiskeyintheJar/Kyraryker says**

3.5 stars

This is an older published gem in my opinion. The couple were such a delight with their back and forth, snark, humor, and sexiness. The heroine was strong and had such an amazing character build with having the emotional struggle of leaving the nunnery and how that affected her relationship with her mother and the hero was the strong, dry humor, snarky, and sexy man I read these stories looking for. These two together are definitely worth the price of admission.

The story starts off a bit slower but does an amazing job introducing you to the hero and heroine, getting you to really know them. They then come together and spend the rest of the book together with the middle specifically focusing on them and giving the reader an incredible romance relationship to read. The middle starts to drag a smidgen and the ending dealing with the mystery/conspiracy, why Ryder is on the run, gets a bit rushed as it becomes a bit too twisty turn-y for the limited time left.

This was a great finish to the series and the author did a great job wrapping everyone's story up and giving us a fond look and goodbye to this family. You could read this without reading the others in the series, you'd miss some family relationship connections but worth it I say to read about this couple. Ryder and Mary are the couple you read romances looking for.

I read this as a Buddy Read, for more quotes, comments, and in depth conversation, Only In Your Arms buddy read

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### **Robin says**

After a lot of thought and prayer, Sister Mary Francis has decided to leave the convent and start a new life. Deciding to travel west to visit her sister and find a job as a teacher, Mary learns that her friend, Ryder McKay, has been sentenced to hang for a crime he didn't commit. When Mary visits him at the jail, she is taken hostage during his daring escape. Soon they are running for their lives through rugged Indian territory.

This is the last book in Goodman's Dennehy Sisters series. I was looking forward to this story because throughout the series we really didn't learn too much about Mary Francis. I have to say I was thoroughly bored with the first 100 pages of this book. The story did finally get more interesting, only to once again leave me bored in the last quarter. Too many descriptions for me. I think a 100 pages could easily been edited out of this story. My rating: 3 Stars.

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### **Keri says**

I have enjoyed this entire series and wish that we had a Christmas book that was a follow-up to the entire family. Jay Mac was a hoot about his daughters. Wonderful series. I still have one more book, but couldn't

resist reading this.

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### **A (Is For Awkward) says**

While having a fairly coherent mystery plot (if still overdone), the romance was undermined by irrational and never fully explained cruel behaviour on the part of the hero, overly rushed timeline, and a failure to fully explore the way religion influenced the heroines life both before and after leaving the convent and how that affected her choices. I was never going to like it as much given the way the kidnapping trope played out (one of my least favourite romance tropes), but it could/should have been much better than it was. Also as a series finale it was really underwhelming, if a step up from the terrible middle.

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### **Jultri says**

Another well written book by this great author and once again, the first half had me begging for more. Interesting background for the heroine, who started off with being a nun tortured with her internal battle of whether being in a convent is her true call or best way to serve God. The hero is an introverted alpha male, who stands apart from the rest of society because he was raised by the Apaches. Their first encounter was charming and the banter wonderfully witty, and their next encounter was aching and tender. What bothers me about her books is that the leads tend to get together half way through and their romances then get sidelined for some other plot lines. It's probably a matter of personal preferences, but I prefer romances to be just straight romances and take centre stage through out the book and that the climax pertains to some crisis in their relationship rather than relate to some crime solving mystery or adventure plot.

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