



Kept

Sally Bradley

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Life has taught Miska Tomlinson that there are no honorable men. Her womanizing brothers, her absentee father, and Mark, the married baseball player who claims to love her—all have proven undependable. But Miska has life under control. She runs her editing business from her luxury condo, stays fit with daily jogs along Chicago's lakefront, and in her free time blogs anonymously about life as a kept woman.

Enter new neighbor Dillan Foster. Between his unexpected friendship and her father's sudden reappearance, Miska loses control of her orderly life. Her relationship with Mark deteriorates, and Miska can't help comparing him to Dillan. His religious views are so foreign, yet the way he treats her is something she's longed for. But Dillan discovers exactly who she is and what she has done. Too late she finds herself longing for a man who is determined to never look her way again.

When her blog receives unexpected national press, Miska realizes that her anonymity was an illusion. Caught in a scandal about to break across the nation, Miska wonders if the God Dillan talks about would bother with a woman like her—a woman who's gone too far and done too much.

Kept Details

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From Reader Review Kept for online ebook

Nancy Kimball says

When I dive into a book, I'm hoping to find three things. Great characters that live and breathe on the page, a really good story that holds my attention and entertains me (minimum) or one that makes me think about my own behaviors and beliefs while entertaining me (best), and vivid, strong writing.

This book was that. And a bag of chips. I almost read it in a single sitting and would have if I hadn't started it at 10 p.m. As a society we're geared to turn away in judgement of "other women" and "mistresses" and I'm not any different. Sure in the New Testament as Christians we know about the woman at the well and there was a prostitute in the line of Christ and all that. So I know Jesus loves the lost, and I do too, as long as they aren't making my own life messy and complicated. Like what happened to the hero in this story. And learning what happened to the heroine along the way that made her a Kept woman, and why that becomes not enough anymore. Miska's journey is an incredible one for sure, and I related so much to her in spite of the fact I'm not dating a rich married athlete and living in a high-rise in Chicago. She's real. She's honest. She's broken. I think that's true of us all, and I'm delighted the author allowed us to see that.

Christina says

Sally Bradley is a powerful new voice in Christian fiction who dares to write about tough topics and manages to keep her characters real. A lot of Christian fiction tends to get too heavy-handed in the spiritual department, but I didn't find that the case here.

The story itself was phenomenal. Around the middle of the book there was one scene with Dillan, which I won't spoil, but wow! So well written and believable, I felt like a fly on the wall. I do wish there had been an epilogue, because I wasn't finished reading the book when it ended. I wanted to know more about what happened to Miska!

Bottom line, if you have ever enjoyed a Francine Rivers novel, you will adore this book.

Iola says

I first saw Kept reviewed by Rel Mollet of Relz Reviews. Like me, Rel is tired of reading Christian novels which have the same feel as every other Christian novel. We're looking for something real, something different, but something which still affirms our Christian faith. Rel raved about Kept, and while I bought it immediately, it's taken me a while to get around to reading it. I kept (ha ha) hearing good things about it from people whose opinions I respected, and I started to wonder ... could it really be that good? Or was I setting myself up for disappointment?

Well, it really is that good.

Kept isn't perfect. There was one amusing typo (a segue is a change of topic in conversation; the two-wheeled ride-on has the same pronunciation, but it's a Segway. Silly name, if you ask me). There was one scene from the point of view of a minor character that didn't seem to add anything to the plot (and in hindsight, could have been eliminated), and there were a couple of minor plot points that didn't make sense (maybe they'll make more sense on the re-read). And there were times when I would have liked to better

understand what was going on inside Dillan's head. He plain didn't make sense at times. Of course, he's a man, so that could explain things.

Those details aside, Kept clocks up a number of achievements that rate highly with me. She's managed something completely original—a story about a kept woman, a euphemism for a high-class prostitute—yet it's unashamedly a Christian novel, a story of forgiveness and redemption that reminded me of Redeeming Love by Francine Rivers. The writing is excellent, and manages to cover some gritty ground without ever spelling out the ugly details.

Sally Bradley has created a cast of likeable characters who feel true to live, even in their failings. Dillan, at "six foot thirteen", is a complete klutz, which perhaps forces him to cultivate a friendship with Miska even when he'd rather avoid her. His brother, Garrett, is a loveable lawyer with a past he's still trying to get over.

Miska is complex. At first she comes across as the sweet girl-next-door—until we begin to get to know a bit more about her, and realise she's caught up in the oldest profession, and telling herself the biggest lie: that he'll leave his wife for her. One day. It's never exactly explained how she became a kept woman, but we see enough of her background to realise it's a logical progression, and that she feels no qualms for taking the men in her life for everything she can get. After all, that's all men have ever done to her.

Miska's scenes showed how good the writing was, because I was completely engaged in her character. She's an intelligent woman who does dumb, DUMB, things when it comes to me, and there were times I wanted to give her a good shake. Dillan and Garrett were similar, and even at the end I was thinking that Dillan needs to get over himself, while Garrett just needs to get his head examined. They were frustrating, but in a good way—like a teenage daughter. Their actions might be annoying, but you love them anyway.

Yes, that pretty much sums up Kept. Recommended for those who want something real in their Christian fiction.

Jennifer Fromke says

Highly engaging story. Once you begin reading, KEPT won't let go of you until the last page is read, leaving you satisfied but wishing this debut author had another seven books ready to read. With talent like this, she will certainly write and publish and sell many more books. Hurry up and write, Ms Bradley! We need more books like this!

A peek behind the curtain of professional sports figures who travel all the time. And get lonely in various cities away from their wives...Fascinating premise, and the story does not disappoint! Miska is "kept" and her predicament is realistic. I loved the pull and push between Miska and her hero. They both had very real reasons to be together and NOT to be together.

The city of Chicago is highlighted in the novel and anyone who has visited will appreciate the author's attention to detail. The setting descriptions are crisp. The characters do not feel pasted in, but they move and live and breathe comfortably all over this fantastic city. Sigh-worthy romance. Christian fiction that is relevant, realistic, and thoughtfully not cheesy.

I received a free copy of Kept for purposes of review. Now that I've read it, I'll be happy to purchase several copies to give away. It's that good.

Holly Michael says

Wow! Amazing, Sally Bradley. Kept kept me up until 4:00 am and rarely does that happen for me. Scene after scene drew me in to this excellently crafted storyline with fascinating sub-plots and a spiritual depth that could only come from a Christian who knows Jesus intimately.

Sally, you rocked your debut novel! Totally! Five Stars all the way! Kept is first-class fiction with characters so well-developed that you feel a part of their inner circle...as if you've been forever friends with all of them.

Miska--a non-Christian who's living a scandalous life--isn't the type of character you'd think you'd instantly love, yet you do. She's a beautiful, kind-hearted, vulnerable soul who is caught up in a bad lifestyle and truly doesn't think she's doing anything wrong. It's survival. I love that she's open and honest, real and raw. And the truth, which the reader gets right away, is that she really doesn't know Jesus--at all. Her past has wounded her in a way that even she doesn't understand at first.

Miska stereotypes Christians, but asks her new friends questions, even challenges them. She doesn't easily buy into their odd principles and takes time to understand and weigh these new thoughts as she considers what's really important in her life.

It's a fun, frustrating, and heart-tugging walk with Miska. There's no sudden transformation. She stumbles, falls, gets up and then stumbles and fall again, but you find yourself rooting for her and yes, even praying for her.

Hats off to Sally Bradley for crafting such an incredible novel that covers all the bases; excellent characterization, amazing plot with superb subplots, smooth and beautiful prose, dialogue that fits perfectly to the characters and scenes (even the men), page-turning scenes (never a dull moment), and superbly described locales (I feel like I've lived in Chicago). Sally Bradley knows how to draw the reader into the story and hold them there, yes, even until 4 am when you only wanted to read for an hour before sleep.

And one more very important observation: Sally Bradley's apparent solid, clear, and deep understanding of true Christianity would allow any non-Christian to pick up this book, become completely absorbed, then easily and naturally (along with the characters) be transformed by Christ. There's no peachiness or shoving it down your throat Christianity in Kept. Even the solid Christians must learn and grow in their faith in this novel. Truly, one of my best reads ever! It's clear that The Holy Spirit guided the heart and mind of this author in crafting this amazing book. I read literary mainstream fiction and Christian fiction and this novel would fit well in either market.

I sure hope Sally Bradley writes a lot of books because the girl can craft fiction like any bestselling author I've ever read.

R.J. Rodda says

Wow! A romance between a squeaky clean pastor and a young woman for whom sex is a way of life - it is her pick me up and it pays the bills. This contemporary Christian romance pulls no punches and poses a very real problem. How do Christian kids who have lived a very moral life (or are now living a moral life) relate

and witness to people that live in a very different way.

This was all handled so well. I believed in the heroine and cared for her even during the crazy things she was doing. I loved the way Tracy chose to reach out to Miska, I liked the interaction with the brothers and how they responded to the very difficult things happening at their neighbour's house, I liked the depiction of the church youth group and I really liked Dillan (although I found his klutziness a bit strange).

A couple of asides. There are a lot of sexual references here although the sex act itself is not depicted. If you prefer novels about innocent girls and boys this is not for you. I don't think it would be entirely healthy for some church-raised teens to read this. However it does depict how people in the real world are and if we can be inspired to love them like Tracy then reading this is a good thing. This is also great for those who come to God with a past they are still ashamed of - wow that so gets addressed well here.

One final comment - although it was good to see the engaged couple committed to not having sex before marriage and being well chaperoned, Ps Dillan did a couple of times have lunch alone with Miska in her apartment which clearly was unwise.

This is redemptive, the conversion feels real, the scripture well-used and with all that I still had moments of 'I can't believe I am reading this in Christian fiction'. Kudos to the author.

Daphne Self says

There are very few stories, published and unpublished, that draw me in so completely that I push all things aside to finish the book. Sally Bradley's book, Kept, was one of these.

I literally drained my Kindle to read the book and then continued reading the book as it was charging. The charge cord was the umbilical cord that kept me connected to a great story.

Not many writers approach the subject of sexual sin and how addictive and consuming this sin can be. Sally approaches it with finesse and truth. She never veered from the topic, never glossed over the topic, but she never used graphic or profane language to convey her story. The characters were deeply developed and 4-dimensional. The subplots enhanced the story and were dealt with in a timely manner. The rise and fall of the characters' emotional and spiritual states mimicked the rise and fall of our own.

Whether she releases a book within a few months or two years, this is an author for whom I will patiently wait and will always read. Sally Bradley has written a truly amazing book that surpasses many in the publishing world.

Stefanie says

Sally Bradley penned a beautiful story about the redemption of a life renewed by Christ and the grace that God offers each and every one of us, no matter what we have done in our past or will do in our future. This story was heart-warming and gives you a renewed strengthening of your faith when you see the difference God can do in someone's life, no matter how far off the path they may be.

There were times where the dialogue got a little confusing... trying to figure out which characters were

speaking and taking some time to reread sections to get myself back in line with the story. It can be a little detracting from the story when I have to stop and do that, which can get annoying. Overall I think this story was a great read and I would certainly read more of Sally's work.

Kerry Johnson says

Three times.

That's how often my tired eyes were moisturized (aka, I cried) between 11pm and 1am last night when I was flipping pages of Kept, a must-read contemporary Christian novel that skirts the darkness of life without Christ but ultimately pulls back the shadow to reveal brilliant, bright new mercies each morning.

I knew from the endorsements and reviews that this had to be a fantastic book; it's much more than that. Kept is poignant, real, funny. It's raw. It's unforgettable. Kept is filled with characters I came to care deeply for. The author's ability to keep the reader turning pages, rooting for imperfect characters and wondering at what happens next, is a fiction-writing gift.

Miska is a city girl and book editor, hardened at life's offering thus far but hiding a soft heart. Her life is driven by a want she hasn't yet realized she doesn't need. When she meets new neighbor Dillan, a youth pastor who lives with his brother Garrett, an unexpected friendship forms, setting the stage for a future neither expected.

Together? How would that ever be possible?

Miska is such a well-written, imperfect character that I alternated between wanting to hug her and shake her. (Secondary character Tracy took care of that very well.) The friendship between the two women was beautiful and heartfelt; I especially appreciated the way the author doesn't gloss over pain and betrayal but instead reminds the reader of God's grace and forgiveness page after page. Dillan's struggle throughout the story was portrayed with truth and raw emotion that will leave readers rooting for him as well.

The story's ending is exciting and fulfilling all-in-one, leaving a lump in my throat at closing the pages on their story.

As a writer, I was completely taken with the author's skillful use of dialogue to show who these characters were. The scenes between Dillan and Miska were so authentic, their interactions so realistic and powerful, that I felt like a fly on the wall in their high-rise condos, enjoying the view of Buckingham Fountain and the skyline of Chicago right along with them.

How do I sum up a truly beautiful story of redemption like Kept?

God is in the business of restoring what was lost and healing what is broken. Author Sally Bradley doesn't sugar-coat the worldly view some of the characters have - and live - in Kept; instead she drops God's grace plumb in the middle of the mess we can make of our lives without Him, cleaning dirty places and wiping souls clean with grace. Miska's transformation is a powerful reminder that we don't live under bondage but live within His merciful hands.

Kept is a keeper. Read it, ponder who you would be without Jesus, and praise God that he reaches the lowest depths to bring us back to Him. I highly, highly recommend this story and look forward to reading Sally's

other books.

Jocelyn Green says

I normally read historical fiction but I had heard so much about this contemporary novel for so long I knew I wanted to give it a try. I'm so glad I did. This is a brave book that brings the Light into one woman's darkness in powerful, believable ways. If you've read the book description, you know the main character, Miska's, lifestyle, already. Let me assure you it is not portrayed in a sensational or scintillating manner in the least. Instead, we see her honest struggles with insecurity, emptiness, and shame, when she's trying to live with her own (wordly) wisdom, and then we get to watch her grown and change from there. Kept is well-written, with strongly drawn characters and supportive subplots. It kept me turning pages far into the night. This book made me excited and grateful for God's grace all over again. I'll be reading more from Sally Bradley.

Catherine says

I didn't know what to expect when a friend recommended this book. The subject matter was not one I'd considered, certainly not one I'd expect to see in the Christian market, but I was curious as to how the author would handle it. And I was not disappointed. Sally Bradley steps out of the box, way out, with a quiet authority and professional prowess, and does it in such a way that by the time I finished reading Kept, I knew this was a fresh voice for Christian fiction readers, one that is much needed. While not an easy read, this book tells a tale as old as time - how sin can take us down in an instant. Some stay there. Some choose to find a way out. And the fortunate ones discover the only true path to redemption. I couldn't wait to find out where the characters would end up. My only hesitation with the story was at times the spiritual message was a little overdone, but I think this comes down to personal style, author and reader preference. Overall, I applaud the author for bringing the message home and anticipate it will land where it is meant to. Well done, Ms. Bradley. I look forward to reading more from you in the future.

Jamie says

If you're into losing sleep, go ahead and read this book. A few bloggers had already shared how they stayed up into the wee hours of the morning reading Sally Bradley's debut novel, but I thought to myself, I'll totally be able to stop at a decent hour. Totally.

The dark circles under my eyes said otherwise.

The next day I was legitimately angry I had to go to work. Clearly they did not understand my desperate need to finish this book. Life can be so unfair.

Kept is one of the most honest novels I've read and not in a "share inappropriate details or use language for

shock value” kind of way. It doesn’t need that, yet it doesn’t shy away from discussing how life is lived for many people today. It’s real life and shows how messy that can look. This isn’t a book where only one character needed redemption either. They all did in their own ways.

And that’s the beauty of this story and why I stayed up WAY too late reading it.

Yes, some of the characters were already believers, but last time I checked (meaning when I looked in the mirror), accepting Jesus is only the beginning. Life will continue to happen and we will always be in a refining process. We can sometimes be quick to judge, not want to understand or just wash our hands of things and people, but it’s often when we check our hearts and see people how God does, that we’re humbled and get to see transformation happen. And Miska’s story? So beautiful!

While this story falls under Contemporary Romance, y’all it is so much more than a love story. It’s a wonderful story and a beautiful picture of redemption. This is a fresh and much needed voice in the CBA market and I look forward to more of what Bradley writes!

Have you ever been pleasantly surprised by a book? I love when a debut book turns into an incredible surprise!

(With thanks to the lovely author for a copy of the book in exchange for my honest review)

Originally posted at <http://booksandbeverages.org/2014/10/...>

Margaret Metz says

Okay...

I know Sally Bradley. I looked forward to reading her book and told myself to write a thoughtful review (taking the time to carefully check for grammar errors and write something witty and creative). Then I finished and... wow!

This book is well-written, thought-provoking, funny, sad, scary, and romantic. It's also the most authentic piece of fiction I've read in years. I have to admit - it wasn't always easy to read but I also couldn't put it down.

I saw little bits of myself in all the characters. I struggled with how God could forgive me and how people would judge me because of my past. I was also convicted when I considered how I would have reacted to someone with a past like Miska's. Would I have sought out ways to love her and be her friend like Tracy did or be disgusted by her continued bad choices?

Painful pasts, difficult decisions, and consequences battle with hope, love, and forgiveness in a very realistic story representing the power of God to transform lives.

Suzy Baba says

4.5 STAR'S I have never read a book by Sally Bradley before and I have to say I am impressed. Its not a book I would usually read but it completely had my brain on overdrive by the end because of all its biblical

connection with all that goes on around us. I even learned the meaning of some of the verses in there. This book is sad but at the same time beautiful.....Sad because Miska's upbringing shaped her into a very vulnerable per-miscues woman, one that takes a man no matter if he's married or not. She didn't care about consequences and the what if's.... Miska wanted to feel loved but she looked for it in all the wrong places.....Beautiful because of the way Dillon and Tracy fall into her life, showing her the true meaning of loving her self, finding her self and finding the way of God. How involving God in her everyday life makes life more beautiful and bearable in order to find happiness. By the end, she found her happiness by completely giving herself to God and letting him guide her to a better place in life. This truly was a beautiful book to read.

Kara Isaac says

This book is a gripping, authentic, and beautifully written story about the power of love, redemption, and faith. Mika and Dillan are two genuine, vulnerable, flawed, and finely crafted main characters. I highly recommend this incredible debut novel.
