



## Mile 21

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The singles ward is the last place Abish wants to be. But after the unexpected death of her husband (and after being kicked out of her mom's place), she has to move into single-student housing to finish up her schooling. Maybe training for a marathon and winning the heart of the handsome executive secretary are exactly what Abish needs to get a personal best.

## Mile 21 Details

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Author : Sarah Dunster

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## From Reader Review Mile 21 for online ebook

### Lisa (Bookworm Lisa) says

4.5 star rating.

Abish is put into an impossible situation. She is grieving a year after the death of her husband, Everyone around her tells her to get on with her life and that she needs therapy. She just wants to have her husband back in her life and to be a mother to their child. She wants her happily ever after, but it ended suddenly when he unexpectedly passed away.

In the middle of all of this she is in danger of loosing her job, she loses her apartment, and she fears she may be loosing her sanity. She keeps going by running. Running is a major part of the book. Her husband was training for a marathon before his death, she has picked up her life by following his steps, training for a marathon. It is therapeutic for her. Every time she is faced with an upsetting situation, she runs. The problem is that she seems to be running from life.

This book has many heart wrenching moments. I couldn't imagine being in her shoes and facing life on my own. I couldn't imagine the ribbing that she gets from singles who don't understand the emotions that she feels.

She doesn't handle being around people well, so she has in many ways isolated herself from everyone. She has many concrete walls that she needs to figure out how to break through and start enjoying life again.

This book is well written. It is packed with emotion. I couldn't help but like Abish, even though she didn't want to be likable. Her story made me think about life and what it is all about.

This book is written for an LDS readership. There are many insights into the LDS religion and culture that may be hard for someone of a different faith to grasp. The story is good for everyone though.

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### Aimee (Getting Your Read On) says

There is no doubt that Abish has been through a great deal. Being a newlywed and losing your husband would be so hard. Abish has another heartache as well that adds to her overwhelming sense of loss. (you'll have to read to find that one out) Obviously Abish is facing huge obstacles to overcome. Not unlike so many of us at different times and places in our lives.

Here's the thing though. To me, Abish was just mean. Does heartache and loss give someone the right to treat everyone around them like crap? Don't get me wrong, I know heartache. I know plenty of other people who know similar heartache to Abish. But they never got mean. Yes, everyone is different and deals with loss differently. Yes, Abish had a rough time of it but her own actions led to more hardship than she ever needed to have. She got kicked out of her apartment because she failed to live up to her end of the bargain. She was rude and mean. She used people.

For most of the book I didn't like Abish and that is hard as a reader. I want to connect with the characters and I did feel empathy for her situation but unfortunately, her negative thoughts and actions overpowered that most of the time. Abish doesn't want to be judged but she judges harshly herself. And did I mention that she is mean? She is.

Abish does start to redeem herself and thank goodness for the people in her life that don't give up on her and just let her wallow forever in her misery and meanness. I think almost everyone around Abish demonstrates patience, kindness and forgiveness in excess. Abish learns some important lessons as she emerges from her misery and begins to pay attention to others again. Abish realizes that she has treated other poorly. She starts to realize she isn't alone in the hard things she faces in life. She begins to serve others and interact. She seeks out reconciliation. There is a lot of emotion in this book. Not so much romance as the journey of one emotionally messed up girl.

I was happy to find the book ended on a positive note. I needed that. I don't think I ever totally liked Abish but she did redeem herself and the story ended with good feelings and a sense of overcoming and triumph.

This is an LDS fiction book. There are doctrinal topics mentioned that many not familiar with the LDS faith might have a hard time understanding.

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### **Pam says**

Mile 21 is a knockout of a book. It poses the question: What would happen if you were a 21-year-old widow, and then things got worse? That's what happens to Abish. As any person on the edge of depression might do, she makes some foolish choices. As she struggles to hold on to her values she must decide how to adjust to the unfair circumstances thrust upon her. Those around her try to help her regain her social and spiritual footing, but ultimately, Abish is the only one who can do that as she works through the heartaches that have changed the course of her life. As a runner, she seems at first to be running away from the new 'normal' she faces every day, but ultimately she evolves into someone taking charge of her life and running toward what's meaningful and significant. With humor and keen insights, Sarah Dunster has exposed some raw nerves here but hasn't left us hopeless. This superbly written book gives readers an important perspective on the choices people have when life gets messy. I heartily recommend Mile 21.

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### **Kaylee says**

I LOVED this book. I could not put it down.

I've been in kind of a reading slump lately--where the last 4 or 5 books I've picked up, I either stopped reading about half-way through, or finished them but was left feeling "meh."

When I started reading Mile 21, I had no idea what it was about, but it immediately sucked me in. It is so emotional and heart-wrenching and I had to see what happened to Abish. The back cover blurb makes it sound more romancy than it is. I wouldn't necessarily call this a romance... more an LDS women's fic with a romantic subplot, because ultimately, this book is not about the love story with Abish and Bob, it's about whether or not Abish will finally find healing in the end.

I love a good healing story.

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### **Rosalyn Eves says**

While the cover of this novel makes it appear to be a romance, I don't think that's really what it is. I think it's much more an exploration of the main character's personal recovery from devastating grief. At 21, Abish Cavendish Miller is a widow of one year and she's not coping well. She's reached the point in her grief where everyone expects her to move on, but she's not there yet. She's prickly at work, avoids her family, and is generally content to avoid everyone and everything (mostly by running--literally--anytime she feels emotionally threatened). But when her mother kicks her out of her cushy job managing some apartments (or not managing, as Abish seems to be doing) and her boss issues her an ultimatum, Abish finds herself in unexpectedly new (and unwelcome) environs: living with an apartment of girls in an LDS singles ward. All she wants to do is keep her head down, go to school, and get through this.

Gradually, however, Abish finds herself enmeshed in the lives of those around her: the roommates that she consistently underestimates, the good-looking young single father of two with his own concealed pain, even the parents she can't seem to find words to talk to. And she runs. The running seems to be a metaphor for this book of Abish's ability to push through difficult things (she plans to run the Ogden marathon despite the fact that she's never been able to make it past mile 16)--and the running affords her both an escape from her life and a place to make sense of it.

I loved this book. Though I am not a runner nor a widower, I resonated with Abish's struggles to come to terms with her life, particularly within LDS theology, which holds that her marriage to her husband is eternal. How does one come back from that? If she's married to him (and loves him) for time and eternity, what is she supposed to do with the rest of her time on earth? How does she move on from him--and does she even want to? I loved that Dunster managed to ask serious questions without resorting to trite or pat answers--and that she created a realistic look at life inside the bubble of a singles ward (including the good and sometimes terrible things that people do to each other under the banner of their faith). And I'll admit--I cried. Quite a bit, actually, and I'm not one to cry easily when I read. The crying wasn't so much because the novel was depressing (far from it, actually), but because I found myself so moved by Abish and her growth.

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### **Kathryn says**

I have a really bad habit of reading a book really fast because it is so good and then wishing I would have slowed down and let the enjoyment last longer, but it's so hard when a author like Dunster writes with such a captivating ability.

Spoiler alert:

Abish is tired of people telling her she should have moved on past her grief of losing her husband and child after just a year. She did everything right, was going to college, married in the temple and was waiting for the blessings to flow from her obedience, when it felt like her whole world came crashing down. She is now in a bad way. She gets kicked out of her apartment, she's in danger of losing her job and her ability to attend BYU, her family deserts her, when the race to pick up her life and keep moving forward is her only option. The help that she so desperately needs is found in the unlikely place of her boss turned bishop of her new singles ward , a roommate who won't let her just disappear in her room, and a divorced father of 2 small children. Can she let go of her past dream and move forward with life?

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### **Katie W says**

I was drawn into this story and I was feeling the emotions right along with Abish. Abish married young and was widowed less than a year later. At 21, she finds herself back in the singles scene at BYU-I. She's trying

to cope with her grief and be self-sufficient, yet she doesn't feel she fits in anywhere--not with the marrieds, not with the singles. She doesn't want to accept help, which I can relate to--I hate asking for help. She is trying to come to terms with gospel truths and how they can still apply to her and many questions are raised; questions that she feels require a footnote, however, no footnotes are given.

Abish came off across as very independent and almost abrasive at times--she was very snarky and sarcastic. Her history unfolds during the course of the story--it's not all given up front. For me, that worked well. I kept wondering at the hints given and kept turning the pages to find out what she had endured.

Bob was great!! He's got a past himself, but he chooses to deal with things much differently. I love how accepting he is, even with the verbal darts thrown at him.

The descriptions of a singles ward and the people there was a lot of fun. I loved the Bishop and how he handled things and Shelley was awesome. The marathon scene brought tears to my eyes. I really appreciated that there was an epilogue. I love things to be wrapped up.

Content: talk of making out; religious stuff; clean.

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## Emily says

A Whitney Award finalist in the General Fiction category, *Mile 21* is a moving account of grief, loss, and the painful process of healing in a uniquely LDS setting.

It's been a year since Abish Miller's husband of only seven months died from a fluke pulmonary embolism. At the age of 21, she'd never envisioned herself a widow and is struggling to maintain any semblance of a life. Her monotonous on-campus job, doing payroll at BYU-Idaho, and managing her mother's fourplex married student apartments is almost more than she can handle.

Likewise, relationships with friends and family have suffered - "withered on the proverbial vine" she says - and "right now, I just can't scrape together enough...initiative? Pride? Anger?...Enough of anything, to care."

And then it just gets worse. Her mother fires her after one too many lapses as apartment manager, forcing Abish to look for a new place to live. In a singles' apartment. With roommates. In the ward where her boss - "Burt the Turd" in her mind - was just called as bishop.

Abish's only salvation is running. She runs to work in the morning, runs home at night, and runs at every opportunity in between. She finally decides to sign up and train for the marathon she and her husband Mark had talked about running together.

Dunster's depiction of Abish's grieving process is so real and raw, it almost hurt to read. She's lonely and sad and angry and afraid of forgetting even as she knows it's inevitable that she'll forget some things. She feels guilty about wanting to move on, but there's another part of her that resents Mark for leaving her and God for taking him, but then she feels guilty for that, too. Dunster does an incredible job of juggling all of those conflicting emotions and layering them with Latter-day Saint beliefs in a way that comes across as real rather than affected.

To read the rest of this review, visit [Build Enough Bookshelves](#).

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## **Shauna says**

This book pulls at your heart-strings and makes you wonder...what would you do if you lost your best friend, your soul-mate, your spouse? And how fast would you be able to move on?

Written with such raw emotions this book is one you just can't put down.

SO. SO. SO. AMAZINGLY. GOOD!  
LOVED it from the very first page!

Lots of very interesting questions are brought up throughout these pages....and are given as a great book club discussion at the end of the book.

Abish has had a very hard year!

First her husband expectantly dies...so she is dealing with that grief.

Then she is kicked out of her apartment, has to move into a "single's apartment," AND a "single's ward."

Finds herself in some really awkward positions and places.

She is back in school and training for a marathon

And all the while she keeps asking "What did I do to earn this?"

Can she really find her way? Can she trust "that the plan is a plan of happiness?"

This is a book that will stay with you long after you have turned the last page!

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## **Tiffany says**

A few months ago I saw this book and past over it. it kept coming up and I kept passing by it... the cover seemed a little 1980's from the gold rings to the pink rose. Well, I was in a bit of a book slump and this one popped up again, so I decided to try a sample... by page two I was hooked. I'm so glad I read this one!

This book is about a girl named Abish who is recently widowed. She is 21, not married, but not "single" and struggling to get through her life as an undergrad at BYU-I. She is training to run the marathon the her husband never was able to run.

Oh Abish, I cried, I laughed, I nearly threw my kindle a few times and I really rooted for you. I loved this book! Yes it was heartbreaking and I don't usually pick up these kind of books, but something about this book... wow!

I loved reading Abish's internal monologue.... wait, dialogue? it was so real, so touching. Her bishop/boss was stern, but so perfect, so real. Her roommates, oh wow... made me glad I never had them. Mama, Pen and Suzy... and of course Bob. The only thing about this book I didn't like was the characters' names... Bob, not a swoon worthy name...Abish eek hard one to get past, admittedly one of the reasons I kept passing it up. There are others like a girl named Steve and the "turd" too. But the names were the worst part for me... so that is really saying something.

The pace of the book was a little slower than what I've been reading recently, but it fit the story perfectly. I recommend this book, its the first book in a LONG time to make me favorites list.

Content: Clean

(there is talk of the first husband passing away and of miscarriage...)

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### **Lia says**

It is a mark of a well-written book that most of the negative comments about it center around the dislike of a character's personality. I can understand this point of view if the bulk of your reading experience is in the LDS genre where the protagonists are practically perfect in every way. I do like the genre because I prefer its cleanliness- and I'm LDS so I get the jargon, but please do not discourage the injection of a bit of reality, too. I used to be a bishop's wife, but a close look at my inner struggles and character flaws would reveal varied, less-than-traditional facets. Abish is very real, and there is no fault in that. She is reacting to the world that produced her current situation. Unless a person has experienced true depression, and I would not wish that on anyone, maybe it is difficult to accept her lashing out at the world. This is a deep study of human nature- including the growth and redemption at the end. Everyone has a journey, and Abish's journey shows the dichotomy that can exist within each of us at times. It is well-worth the read.

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### **Colleen says**

Abish has lost a lot by the tender age of twenty-one. Which in turn leaves her in a state of grieving and strange behavior, especially by her actions and how she see's the world. She has a loving family, but they don't seem to understand what she is going through, so she ends up taking life and it's misfortunes and runs away from more heartache.....so she thinks.

Enter her boss (the turd) and Bob the executive secretary, and her new single man starved roommates and personalities collide!

When I first started reading this book it seemed like Abish was totally lost and wanted to be left to her own thoughts and actions, so the first quarter of the book is a jumble of emotions and frustrations. After that I got more into it, especially when she started opening up and letting people in. There were some parts that left you laughing which was a great addition, the football game was one of my favorite parts!

The roommate situation took me back to my college days and made me grateful for the great roommates I had! Sarah did a great job at conveying the emotions of this book. If you do find it hard to get into, trust me you wont be waiting for too long for the true heart of this book to shine forth and bring you peace and contentment.

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### **Emmy says**

Abish's life gets turned upside down when her husband dies after just a little over a year of marriage. She isn't quite sure what to do with her life after this and has a hard time adjusting to everyday life. When she continues to fall through on responsibilities she finds herself forced back into the single student scene and housing at BYU-Idaho. Her trials have left her hard and sarcastic and even doubting her faith at times.

At first I found myself having a hard time connecting with the main character and almost annoyed with her at times, but I quickly began to empathize with her struggles and really began rooting for her and wanting

things to be okay and came to like her character a lot. The book left me crying at times but ended with a feeling of peace and happiness.

The book addresses how do you keep your faith and hope when everything seems to fall apart.

This is definitely an LDS- novel, set at BYU-Idaho and a lot of LDS lingo and culture. I believe anyone could appreciate and learn something from her struggles and how journey as she tries to get her life back on track but might be a little lost if you do not have at least some familiarity with the LDS culture.

This is a clean book, with no language or graphically sexual scenes.

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### **Peggy says**

There's a lot more to this book than a typical LDS romance. It deals with some tough subjects and for the most part handles them well. Typical of Cedar Fort publishers, it needs help in the copyediting department but it's well-written and enjoyable.

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### **Kathleen says**

Mile 21 is a poignant story that follows a young widow's journey of healing and learning to move forward with her life.

Twenty-one year old widow Abish is still grieving the loss of her husband a year after his death. She is having a hard time adjusting to life without her husband, she is unable to let go of the past and move forward with her life. Abish's life is on a downward spiral when she is evicted from her apartment and has to move into the student housing at BYU-Idaho, almost loses her job, and is suddenly thrown back into the "singles" scene. Abish has lost her hope and faith, the only thing that keeps her sane is running, which becomes a therapeutic way of dealing with the trials and tribulations in her life. Her husband had been in training for a marathon before his death, so she decides to follow his lead and train for the marathon. Can training for the marathon help Abish overcome the difficult obstacles in her life, provide a healing source, and help her move forward with her life?

Author Sarah Dunster weaves an emotional tale of heartbreak and redemption that simply tugs at your heartstrings. You can't help but feel compassion for Abish and the traumatic loss that she endured at her young age. I can relate to and understand her hard, abrasive and sarcastic personality, it was a mask to hide the pain and grief that she was living with. As she struggles with her faith and how to pick up the pieces of her life, it makes a reader wonder if they would be able to go on with life if they were in Abish's shoes. As Abish's story unfolds, you can't help but cheer her on as her journey to healing and rebuilding her life is buoyed with a renewal of hope and faith as she trains for the marathon. I enjoyed watching Abish grow and change throughout her journey, and while there is a subtle romance in the story, the main focus is clearly on Abish's journey to healing.

The author evokes a mixture of emotions in Mile 21 that is simply breathtaking. Her thoughtful message to her readers comes shining through in Abish's story: remain strong, have hope, and keep your faith as you heal and learn to come to terms with changes in your life.

Disclaimer: I received a copy of the book from the author / publisher in exchange for my honest review.

<http://jerseygirlbookreviews.blogspot...>

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