

Haven Cross

Julie Daines

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Daines's novel breaks with genre conventions to deliver a tale with broad appeal.

In Julie Daines's *Havencross*, a young woman finds romance and adventure in the nineteenth-century Cornish countryside.

Retreating from London after a family scandal, Elaine Cardham travels with her parents to their ancestral home. Her marriage prospects are ruined, her parents aren't talking, and her home reminds her of her lost brother, John, and her rebuffed suitor, Gareth.

While Cornwall lacks London's luster, mystery abounds. Not only is it the land of Arthurian legend, but smugglers roam the countryside. When Elaine stumbles upon an injured woman, she enters the adventure of a lifetime.

At first, *Havencross* seems like a typical regency-era romance—like a walk along a country road, the story leads down a familiar genre path. But dig a little deeper and the novel breaks the genre, mixing its romance with a well-paced, rambunctious adventure tale.

This genre twist succeeds because of economical descriptions and a powerful setting. Cornwall comes to life through Elaine's eyes, with its rocky cliffs, thorny brambles, and craggy coastline where smugglers find safety.

The mix of romance and adventure gives characters depth and complexity. Elaine is a woman of her times, ruled by genteel manners and profitable marriages. Yet she has a modern independent streak: she walks the countryside alone and later grapples with a smuggling ring.

Elaine's former suitor isn't just a good-looking paramour, but a young man struggling with his father's loss and newfound legacy; Elaine's mother doesn't just illustrate the perils of regency-era marriage, but endures humiliation and grief.

Elaine's adventures are a clear throwback to the novels of the regency era, with a mix of tales from the age of chivalry. The result is a cross-genre story that could serve as a haven for anyone.

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