



For Keeps

Natasha Friend

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Josie's never met her dad, and that's fine with her. To Josie, Paul Tucci is just a guy who got her mom pregnant and then moved away. It all happened sixteen years ago, when Josie's mom was still a teenager herself. But now Paul Tucci is back in town, and Josie has to deal with not one but two men in her life - her father and her first boyfriend, who Josie fears will hurt her just like Paul hurt her mother.

For Keeps Details

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From Reader Review For Keeps for online ebook

Audery says

Mckeda Knight says

A shocking discovery had revealed the long lost truth about a man named Paul Tucci to Josephine Gardener who was his daughter and Kate Gardener who was his former high school sweetheart. Since Josie was born, she had been hearing stories about this man. As a teenager she became very defensive of her mother and emotional when mention was made of him and his hasty departure after Kate became pregnant. Josie is now at this stage in high school and she is insecure about men based on what her mother had experienced.

However with the support of an understanding mother and a loving and caring best friend Josie becomes the girlfriend of one of the most popular boys in school. His name was Matt Rigby, and he loved her for who she was and provided a shoulder to lean on in the quest to find out who she really was.

Josie is a sixteen year old girl who has a very close bond with her mother; they had the type of relationship many girls would kill for, Olivia would often tell her this. They lived alone and defied all odds as a team, through this mother and daughter bond they would confide in each other. However, when Kate begins dating Jonathan, she spent less time with her daughter and this infuriated Josie. Her best friend Olivia expressed to Josie that her mother was a grown woman and since her birth she hadn't been in any serious relationships and needed a life which not only consisted of Josie but of a loving male companion.

An almost fatal accident brings Josie, Paul Tucci, and the rest of his family together. Kate suddenly goes back in time and becomes the heartbroken teenager she was 16 years ago. Both Josie and her mother discover that for years what they had thought were lies. Kate's parents sought to protect her by ending all connections with Paul, so what Kate knew were things said by former schoolmates who were close to Paul and her assumptions. However now that he came back he could speak for himself and all the misconceptions were ended causing the father and daughter relationship to blossom.

This has an interesting lesson which is mainly aimed towards teenage girls. I have personally learned a lot from this story. Life is made up of many obstacles and if you're not strong or have emotional and physical

support, you can think of doing really terrible things that may haunt you for life. Prevention is always better than the cure; however, after damage has already been done, we just have to face it the best way we can. Your parents are the most important people in your life either for being the best or being the worst because they are the ones who allowed you to be born, most parents want the best for their children, and no matter how much as young people we think what they say or do might be ridiculous or hurt us, most times it's because they love us and they see how beneficial their actions will be to make our future more positive. I would recommend this book to teenage girls who think that if they make a mistake that change their life; it's not the end of the world. Most of all this will help them to realize that they need to think seriously before they act as preventing a situation is better than finding a solution to it.

Hira says

'Did you say please just follow me, I thought you wanted me, 'cause I want you all to myself [...]' I was listening to All to Myself by Marianas Trench when I was thinking of how to write the review for this. Well, the chorus of it definitely describes Josie's relationship with her mom. More on that later

I can't say I hated the book. I got through it, and actually liked the relationship between Josie and her grandfather, little that it was, and also the concept to some extent. I felt the author didn't stick to the story. She starts the book off with Josie and her mom running into Josie's paternal grandparents, who don't know she exists, and then they're not mentioned again until the end of the book. It seems that the author got sidetracked by Josie's other relationships.

The characters were quite cliche, storyline was predictable. I wanted to read more of Josie and her grandparents, but the author didn't give much importance to that relationship.

And there were a few annoying factors:

1. As I said above, Josie wanted her mom all to herself. To some extent, that was fine, but her portrayal seemed quite exaggerated, she came off as very clingy.
2. Her worshipping Liz. You know how there's always that character that can't do anything wrong? Everyone just loves them and wants to be them? That is Liz (according to Josie at least). When Josie talked of Liz, it was always something like 'She can wear the weirdest outfits to school, and she'll pull it off when no one else can. The next day all the freshmen girls will be wearing that same outfit.' a) That just doesn't seem realistic to me and b) Josie said that same sentence at least 3 times that I remember. 2 too many times.

That is my rant for the day.

kari says

This book is an okay teen lit romance. If you're in the mood for that, this will likely fit the bill. Not anything really too different or deep here.

While I liked the characters of Josie and her mom, Kate, they both seemed to be very willing to always see the worst in the males in their lives. I understood Josie's caution with Matt and her reasons for it, but she seemed to be angered by him too easily. She was both physically too easy with him and emotionally too

tough on him. She seemed to be all over the place in her dealings with him. Didn't care much for that about her, although maybe it was realistic, not sure.

Her mom's relationship with her long lost father seemed to have too many people interfering in it to be believable. First his friend and then her parents. Did Kate never think to pick up the phone? Surely his best friend or someone would have had a phone number? It seemed just a bit contrived that they both loved each other and wanted to be together, but his letters were hidden and his calls never got to her, etc. I might have been okay with that if when all the secrets finally come out, if her father Paul hadn't been planning to just go on with his life, without first finding out if there was still something with the mother of his child. That didn't work for me. I'd just been convinced by all the evidence that he was actually a good guy, but then that is kind of snatched back again. If both her parents had truly matured then they'd need to find out what was between them before making commitments elsewhere. The resolution was both too easy and too brief. Everyone was forgiven just like that, sixteen years of separation from her father and oh, well, no one meant it to be cruel so it's all okey-dokey? And Paul, no matter what Kate's wishes might have been, he had both an emotional and financial obligation to his child. And Kate, no matter her feelings, had no right to keep a man from his child for her own selfish reasons. All of this comes out in the last dozen or so pages and all these issues should have been explored instead of just wrapping it all up there. They'd just gotten to the real work of putting their lives together when the book ends.

All in all, just ho-hum, not bad, not great.

Susane Colasanti says

A sweet, touching read that zigs when you expect it to zag.

Sara says

Josie Gardner and her mother, Kate, are best friends. Kate had Josie when she was only sixteen years old, after her boyfriend, Paul Tucci, moved away to Arizona and left her to raise the baby alone. Josie works for an OCD ice cream shop owner who dreams of one day opening a coffeeshop, plays soccer on the girls' team with her other best friend Liv, and worries through her complicated relationship with Matt Rigby, while her mom, who owns a bookstore, starts dating a jazz musician. But one day, Kate and Josie see Paul's parents at the grocery store, and Kate hides behind a grocery display until Josie sends her out to the car. This odd behavior causes Josie to wonder a bit, and as the story progresses, she begins to see her mother not just as her mom and best friend, but as a woman who has made mistakes and has regrets. And one afternoon when Josie goes in to work, she discovers that Bob, her employer, has taken the leap to convert the ice cream shop to a coffeeshop, and soon Josie finds herself serving pastries and cocoa on a regular basis to her grandfather, who still doesn't know who she is.

I found this book to be an interesting glimpse into the relationship between a single mother and her daughter. Although the story is told in Josie's voice, Kate is a well-developed character. The conflicts are not always well-written or explained, but that is in line with Josie's perspective of her mother. It is also worth noting that Josie's best friend, Liv, has two male parents – a gay couple. This novel would appeal to fans of Sarah Dessen or Deb Caletti.

Clara Sedlar says

Personal Response

For Keeps was an overall pretty good book. It had many parts that allowed for me to connect to it easily. For example, Josie is the athletic yet hardworking type of girl which made the book easy to follow and relate to. One of the parts that I did not like very much was where Josie and her friend, Liv skipped out of one of their practices ended with them skipping three games. The book only followed one of the games they sat for. Altogether, I have many positive things to say about *For Keeps*.

Plot Summary

For Keeps is a romance type book with quite a few plot twists throughout. Kate, Josie's mother starts off being a control freak in a way since Josie is headed in her junior year in high school. This also turns out to be the year that Kate got pregnant. Paul Tucci, which is Josie's father, moved away before Josie was even born leaving Kate to take care of her. With that being said, Paul's parents were someone that Kate avoided greatly. One day when Josie was working, she ended up having to serve Nico and Christina Tucci, her grandparents. This was a secret that she kept from her mother for quite some time. Josie soon learns that her grandfather is diabetic and had too much chocolate ending in a ride to the hospital, where she formally meet her grandparents and uncles. Throughout the book, Matt Rugsby and Josie had some chemistry what seems to have occurred before and during the novel. With there being a very slim chance of Kate and Paul getting back together, she goes out and finds a guy named Jonathan. The relationship between them was going good until a break was taken toward the end of the novel. Finally, Paul and Kate talk with Josie about trying to get to know each other so that Paul would not miss the next sixteen years of her life.

Recommendation

I recommend this book to anyone from the eighth grade up. Though the cover may get some looks, the story told is very good for anyone. There are a few different lessons that could be pulled from this type of story. A romance novel like this is not full of love stories and such, but has romance put in places that make the book enjoyable to read. Overall, *For Keeps* is a book that I would for sure recommend for it was easy to follow and connect with.

Stephanie says

For 16 year old Josie Gardner's entire life, it's always been just her and her mom, Kate. The two of them share everything and have an incredible relationship: the ideal mother-daughter/best friend bond. Josie's never known anything different, until the Tuccis move back in town, who just so happen to be the parents of Paul Tucci . . . Josie's father that left town when he and Kate were teenagers themselves and had just found out they were going to be having a baby. Josie's never known him and feels resentful, meanwhile, Kate has become an emotional mess, while they anxiously tiptoe around town hoping Paul doesn't show up anytime soon. Throw in Josie's hot new boyfriend, Matt, Kate's clingy new boyfriend, Jonathan, Josie's whacky but always lovable best friend Liv and her two dads, and you've got one hell of an adventure!

This was a really enjoyable read! I loved the emotions and honest feelings - it kept the story feeling real and helped me to connect with the characters - Josie in particular. I loved the strong mother-daughter relationship, because to me, that is the most special relationship in the world. Their's reminded me of the Gilmore Girls - one of my all time favorite shows! I also loved that the author kept their relationship real and added tension and fights between them, because let's face it, no matter how close any of us are with our

parents, we all fight with them sometimes. Liv, as well as her two dads, Pops and Dodd, were also great characters that provided lots of comic relief. For some reason, I kept envisioning Dodd as Cam from Modern Family, which is another one of my favorite shows. He reminded me a lot of him, which is a good thing. Anyways, I thought this book was wonderfully done. It was realistic, charming, and emotional. I am planning on reading Natasha's other books.

Note: I received a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review.

Andrea says

Okay, so after reading this book, for some reason, I keep picturing the Gilmore Girl chacters in my head. Especially Paul Tucci--I keep seeing him as Christopher from the TV shower. I see a lot of similarities in the way that the mother-daughter bond is in both the tv show and the book.**

This was a pretty good book for me. Nothing spectacular, but I enjoyed it. I felt that the characters and the story line seemed very real. I think that having a mom dating again is an ordeal (not sure if this is the right word) that many teenagers go through if they live with a single mom. And I think that the romance between Riggs seems pretty real too. (I know some bloggers are having problems with Josie forgiving him for something too easily, but honestly, I probably would have done the same thing.)

The only thing that I didn't like is that I felt that the ending was too soon. I want to know more about what happened with Paul Tucci and with the guy Josie's mom was dating. And I want to know more about Josie and Riggs' relationship.

If you want a cute, "real" read, then I think you would enjoy this one.

**Okay, after posting this and then going to read other reviews of this book, I see that I am not alone in thinking that the book resembles Gilmore Girls.

Jeni Bell says

Imagine if everything you thought you knew about the parent you've never met turned out not to be true.

In Natasha Friend's young adult novel 'For Keeps,' 16-year-old Josie is just about to enter her junior year of high school when the grandparents she's never met—the parents of the man whom Josie's mother says did not want any part of their lives after Josie was born—move back to Josie's hometown after 17 years.

Josie's mother, Kate, and her high school boyfriend, Paul Tucci—who moved to another state with his parents long before Josie was born—never told Paul's parents about the pregnancy. And the sudden arrival of the Tuccis in Josie's hometown throws her mother, Kate, for a loop. "I am crouched behind a tower of Meow Mix in the pet food aisle of Shop-Co, watching my mother hyperventilate," Josie says the first time she and her mother spot the Tuccis at the grocery store, and when Josie learns who they are, "For a moment I can't breathe ... I have a thousand questions for him, if he ever decides to show up on our doorstep, begging

to answer them,” Josie says.

But as the arrival of the Tuccis sends her mother into a serious regression to the girl she was in the 1980s—a heartbroken high school student with a lack of self confidence and a passion for cheesy ‘80s movies and television shows, Josie ends up befriending her grandfather in the most unlikeliest of places: the coffee shop where she works. And when a tragedy connects Josie with her father for the first time, she learns the real reasons she’s never met him—and it brings into question the “us against the world” relationship she’s always shared with her mother.

There’s a lot of drama in ‘For Keeps’—but there’s a lot of humor, too, as when Liv, Josie’s best friend, teases Josie for her crush on Matt Rigby, who formerly went out with the captain for Josie’s soccer team, and with whom Josie shared stolen kisses while Matt and his girlfriend were on a break: “Easy, Hester,” [Liv] says. As in Hester Prynne. As in *The Scarlet Letter*, which we read in sophomore lit and which has haunted me ever since.” Or when one of Liv’s two dads serenades the other during a family dinner to congratulate him on his promotion at work. Or when Liv, “stone-cold sober, starts Riverdancing to Eminem, and she couldn’t care less what (anyone) thinks. That’s why I love her,” Josie says.

And there is honesty in the dynamics between family members and friends that will ring true for teens, as when Liv tells Josie, who is scared to go out with Matt because she’s afraid of getting hurt, “Matt Rigby is not your dad … So stop assuming that every guy in your life is going to do what he did. It’s not fair to anyone, least of all you.”

Lola says

Though I am a fan of Natasha Friend, it was not the fact that she wrote this that drew me to this book. What made me want to read *For Keeps* was a review I read on Goodreads that compared it to *Gilmore Girls*. Being an avid *Gilmore Girls* fan, I knew I had to read this.

Unfortunately, there was no Luke or Taylor Doose in this edition, but there were some pretty cool characters. Josie and Kate definitely had a Rory-Lorelai dynamic, but it was not the same. This mother-daughter duo was different from our favorite TV one (first off, Josie plays soccer and Kate likes to go running and can actually cook!), and their relationship is infinitely more complicated. Of course, that doesn’t mean I like them any less. Josie was a kindred spirit, and I saw a lot of myself in her (minus the soccer). Friend did a good job with Kate, never painting her as a villain or as a saint when all the drama unfolds. After all, she had just been a confused teenager when she had Josie. I loved Liv (though I’m infinitely glad I don’t have a friend obsessed with Dr. Phil) and her quirky dads.

One thing I did not care for in this story were the romances. They weighed the story down too much when all you really wanted to focus on was Kate and Josie and Paul Tucci. That stuff took too long to unfold, and by the end I didn’t feel like I really knew Paul at all.

Still, though not *Gilmore Girls*, it did have many elements of the show I loved: humor, heartbreak, tons of drama, and an I breakable mother-daughter bond. Totally recommend!

Adriana says

I really enjoyed *For Keeps* by Natasha Friend. It drew me in right away and I started caring for the characters really quickly. Josie has grown up as the only daughter to her single mom Kate, who had her at a very young age. Josie has also grown up knowing that when her mom was 16 and pregnant, her dad, Paul Tucci left her and moved to Arizona. So when they spot his parents at the grocery store, Kate and Josie's past comes storming back. Is Josie's dad back in town too? Josie is also a great soccer player and she has a best friend named Liv, who has two dads and a ahead-of-her-time fashion sense. The story takes place during Josie and Liv's junior year and they both have some romantic involvements as well. In particular Josie had an encounter of sorts with Matt Riggs over the summer when he was still with his girlfriend, but now, he's single and making eyes at Josie. All in all, I really loved the teen aspects of *For Keeps*, as well as the relationships between Josie and her mom, Josie and Matt and Josie and Liv. The language of each character was spot on and the writing never got boring or cliched. I felt like I was stepping into the story and the moments in these character's lives. Characterizations were great and each person had their own quirks, even Josie's grandfather. Not too sappy with just the right amount of humor and heart.

Steph Su says

The premise sounds similar to the familial setup of *Gilmore Girls*, and in a ways it is the story of Lorelai, Christopher, and Rory through Rory's point of view. And thankfully the "Rory" in Natasha Friend's story is not as off-putting or unbelievably awkward-pretty as Alexis Bledel. *FOR KEEPS* is a gentle contemporary read, but the degree to which I was invested in Josie's story took me by delightful surprise.

Josie is a fabulously multifaceted character, with a strong and memorable voice. She's got snark and guts, even while grappling with her problem of her lack of trust in men. Above all, she is resilient: when bad things occur, she may hide and retract into her shell for a while, but we get to the point where we have faith in her healing soon.

The other characters also have good voices, quirky but never stereotypical, though I would have liked to have gotten to learn more about Kate. Kate is the central figure in Josie's life, but in between worrying about the proximity of her father's family, and her dealings with her crush, Josie-the-narrator unfortunately forgets to show us the strength and "width" of her relationship with her mother, instead assuming we know what it's like through generalized "telling" statements. The plot, also, is a bit on the weak side: the story starts off strong, with an incredible protagonist voice, but does quite reach its full potential on the scale of epicness.

In spite of those few issues I had with the book, though, I thoroughly enjoyed reading *FOR KEEPS*. It was my first Natasha Friend novel, but it's definitely a keeper for me, with my love for its well-voiced MC, and if Natasha's other books are anything like this one, I will have a new favorite author on the horizon.

Leslie says

I don't love the reality fiction so much unless it's true, and even then I prefer history. Modern, everyday life for teens is too depressing. I mean, the loving, monogamous, moral, responsible role models in this story were gay. Which, nice for kids who have two dads, but . . .

It did make me think, though, about what it's like for my kids to go to school every day and face an endless barrage of kids thinking and talking about sex, drinking, and drugs, and how much that affects them. It makes me want to make my home a more safe, comfortable, loving place, where they can slough all that off and clear their minds. At least I hope they can.

Michelle (FabBookReviews) says

Contains major spoilers

I enjoy reading coming-of-age/contemporary YA, and *For Keeps* was definitely an enjoyable read. However...I felt like it had the potential for much more. I was really, really enjoying the novel, but somewhere around the three-quarter mark, it kind of lost its spark.

We meet sixteen year old Josie Gardner who lives with her single mom Kate. They reminded me very much of Lorelai and Rory Gilmore; quippy, fun, slightly neurotic, and each others' best friend. Josie has lived her life without knowing her biological father, a man named Paul Tucci who got her mother pregnant as a teenager and skipped town.

Josie has plenty of pizazz, and a will-she, won't she romance with a high school classmate school offers some fun reading (though that plot line remains somewhat unfulfilling). Now, here's where things kind of fell off the rails for me. By some strange twist of fate, Paul Tucci's parents- that would be the grandparents that Josie never met, never knew- have moved back to town. The grandparents don't know what Josie looks like, but she knows exactly what they look like, thus leading some awkward sightings. An almost-tragedy leads Josie to reveal herself to her paternal grandparents and to none other than Paul Tucci.

I will say that the revelations that follow from Josie becoming known to Paul and his parents are somewhat muddled and flat. Not only does Josie find out that her mother had been lying to her about her pregnancy but also that there was more to the 'mix-up' that led to Paul and Kate's break-up. These plot lines, in my opinion, were just way too convenient. I feel like I have read too many stories where well-meaning but ignorant parents conspire to keep young lovers apart. Why did Friend choose this route to take? I just felt disappointed by this turn of events and how the book seemed to wrap up too tidily.

Verdict: Overall, I would say good. Friend has a great way with dialogue- for both teens and adults, and offers a realistic representation of teen life. But I have to say, the last quarter of the book was a let-down for me.
