



## Parting Gifts

*Katrina Anne Willis*

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## **Parting Gifts** Katrina Anne Willis

Broken by their unorthodox Midwestern childhood, sisters Catherine, Anne, and Jessica Mathers search for love, acceptance, and worth often in the most unlikely places. Catherine, the oldest of the Mathers sisters, is an English professor battling breast cancer with Cytosan, red wine, and profanity. Anne is a wife and stay-at-home mother of two struggling to make ends meet in a suburban existence that both suffocates and confounds her. Jessica, the youngest by ten years and estranged by choice from her family, is an exotic dancer who feels safer on stage than in a relationship. But when the sisters are faced with an incomprehensible loss, they are forced to reevaluate themselves, their damaged bonds, and their fragile future. *Parting Gifts* illuminates one highly dysfunctional family's tentative, desperate crawl toward a life of meaning and worth."

## **Parting Gifts Details**

Date : Published April 19th 2016 by She Writes Press

ISBN : 9781631520396

Author : Katrina Anne Willis

Format : Paperback 280 pages

Genre : Book Club

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## From Reader Review Parting Gifts for online ebook

### Amanda says

Katrina Anne Willis has created three really well-developed, strong, female main characters in her debut novel. I was impressed by the writing style and the fact that the characters were so real to me, even though I didn't really relate to the subject-matter of the book. In fact, this is a book that normally I would not seek out on my own, but after receiving this review copy I'm glad I got the chance to experience the particular writing style that separates mediocre authors from exceptional writers.

I can't say I was a huge fan of the plot, as again this is not really the type of book I would normally seek out, but if you're a fan of traditional women's fiction you will absolutely love this novel. It centers around three sisters who are all "damaged" in some way due to lingering issues from their childhood, including lackluster parents. Tragedy strikes, and they are each forced to face their past and present demons, discover what they truly want their lives to be, and start living for the first time.

It's a very emotional read, and I think women's fiction aficionados will really enjoy this book. It would be a great Mother's Day gift! \*\*hint hint\*\*

\*Disclaimer\* I received a copy of this book from Booksparks in exchange for an honest review.

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### Jennifer Malenius says

At times a gut-wrenching read! It was a fabulously written book. The characters were so well written, you felt they could be your neighbors, friends, family. The book could be so dark, but then hopeful. The one character, Julie, was so incongruent with the rest of the book. I realize that was purposeful. However, at times, she was so light and so wise that it seemed too unbelievable. I was left wanting more...but in a good way.

I won this book in a goodreads.com giveaway.

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### Amy Magan says

I read this book two years ago and continue to recommend it. I remember it being engaging and surprising. It's one I would read again.

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### Cynthia says

I came to this book after reading several highly "literary" novels, those with complex storylines and sentence structure, so what struck me first was the fact that Parting Gifts is not that kind of story. The sentences are direct. The prose is not wordy. The chapters are short. All of these things are, I believe, intentional, creating a fast-paced, page-turning narrative. I finished in less than 24 hours (not on vacation).

What stands out most is the character development. It is fantastic. I can visualize these characters. I can see parts of them in me and in people I know. I feel like I know them.

I also particularly liked that, while all the characters suffered some truly awful things, I did not find the book depressing. The author used these negative events to drive the narrative and character development, not to manipulate the reader to tears.

At first, I was a little unsatisfied with the ending. Without spoilers, I'll just say that I changed my mind. I wish I knew more about what happened next to these characters, but the ending does tie up the central question/conflict/theme of the book.

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### **Lone Tree Reviews says**

Parting Gifts is the story of how three sisters that are so different from each other, come together in the end after many heartaches. Catherine is the oldest of three, single and a college professor who is battling breast cancer. Anne is the middle sister who is married with two young kids while struggling to make ends meet. Jessica is the youngest by ten years, ran away from home at eighteen to California and totally estrange from the family.

As Catherine is going through chemo treatments for her breast cancer in which she has told nobody except for her best friend, Michelle, a female student of hers named Julie will ultimately change her life. After a trip to see Anne and her mother with Alzheimer's, Julie surprises Catherine with a hot meal on the table which leads to them being a couple but not without repercussions with Michelle.

Anne being a stay-at-home mother to two young kids and having to deal with a rocky marriage, isn't dealing with anything very well. As her husband tries to bring home the money but also at the same time keeping a big secret about who he has been talking with, forces them to downsize and Anne getting a job which leads to this one day that everything will come to a standstill.

When Jessica was growing up, being ten years difference between her and Anne, will make Jessica go through some stuff that her older sisters didn't have to witness with their parents and it makes her want to run away from home at eighteen. While in California, something bad happens to Jessica that makes her run back to home but she doesn't tell anyone that she is back until a encounter with someone that will make her rethink coming home.

One day that will change their lives forever, a family is broken in half but it takes something bigger to happen that will bring the three girls back together in a hopeful fresh start.

All I can say is WOW, the last 60 pages will bring you to tears by what is happening to these three girls. I was able to finished this book in less than two days, I just had to know what happens and I can promise your heart will stop reading the last few pages but by the very last page it will make you very hopeful for this messed up family. I'm not gonna reveal what happens but I think after everyone who reads this book, will take the time to pay more attention around you because you never know when something bad will happen.

Thank You to Katrina Anne Willis for writing such a fantastic debut novel and I can't wait to see what is

next from you!!

I voluntarily reviewed a complimentary copy of this book from BookSparks : April Showers!

I voluntarily reviewed a complimentary copy of this book from NetGalley!

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### **vvb says**

This story is an emotional journey in which a family navigates through many downs before getting back on the up trend.

Each chapter is in the voice of one of the five main characters which provided different viewpoints that made the characters more down to earth. Also, the various storylines were equally interesting to follow.

Many major life issues were touched upon to ponder. But what I liked was the character growth each experienced along the way.

Got me thinking about the qualities of a true best friend.

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### **Debi Lantzer says**

As part of the April Showers Blog Tour, I received Parting Gifts by Katrina Willis. I had never heard of this author, but when I read the back cover of this book, I couldn't wait to read it. Before you read any further, I want you to know that I read this book - cover to cover - in one sitting. I casually browsed the first chapter wondering when I'd finish the book, got wrapped up in the story to the extent that I didn't find it necessary to get dressed, comb my hair or leave the house until I turned the last page of the story. In case that doesn't tell you anything, in plain English this means that this book was a great read. (Ann T. - don't buy the book - I'll lend you my copy!)

Parting Gifts is the story of three very different sisters and how they come together in the end as they overcome their own personal and shared tragedies. The common thread between these sisters is the fact that they shared the same parents who never seemed to be present as they were growing up. I never had a sister, but I always imagined I would have been close to one if I had a sister. This story was interesting in that the three sisters seemed to separate from each other when, given their circumstances in life, they would have gravitated toward each other for solace, love, companionship and guidance seeing as they all three were in the same "life boat".

Catherine Mathers is the oldest of three sisters - she's single and a college professor, and she's battling breast cancer. Next is Anne - the middle sister, who is married with two young kids and she's struggling just to make ends meet. The youngest sister, Jessica is ten years younger by ten years, ran away from home at eighteen to California and totally estranged herself from the family.

I love how Catherine's character evolves in this story, how Julie helped her heart and her eyes open to how

others might feel about certain situations, and how she missed those who had slipped from her life. And then there's Anne, poor Anne over-analyzing everything, silently carrying so much burden until finally opening up to her own husband. When it feels like their family is starting to get their lives together back on track, the unthinkable happens to Max. It was really heartbreaking to stand by and watch Anne's inability to move forward and her husband, Dale's inability to help her.

Finally there's Jessica's story. Throughout the book, we get pieces of Jessica's life and how she has traveled her own road, quite alone and as a reader, I was sad about the life she was living (or really, the life she wasn't living). It seems all she wants is to know how to live like a "normal" person - to know love and be loved. I was so worried about her staying in the same rut for the rest of her life, until I was able to see the change at the very end and then I had hope for Jessica's future.

About halfway through this book, I found this little tidbit:

"Life is too short to worry about who's right and who's wrong.... We waste so much time and energy to get people to see things our way. In the end, does it really matter?"

As a Christian that completely believes in a kind and loving God, it was interesting to watch different members of this family go to the Catholic prayer chants when they needed God's help. They said the prayers they were taught, but failed to connect with God in their hearts. I kept thinking if I was there I would tell them to drop the memorized words, and share with God, talk to Him, ask for His guidance and He can help you.

On the rating system of stars, I would totally give this book 5+ stars on a 1-5 scale. This is Ms. Willis' first book and I can't wait to read more. I even think that this book would make a beautiful series so we readers could learn how the sisters and their families change and grow in the future.

Thanks to BookSparks for the advance reader's digital copy of this book in exchange for my honest review as part of their April Showers Blog Tour -#itsrainingbooks!

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## **Joey P says**

From the synopsis, I thought this book is about sisterhood but it's more than just that. Family, friendship, love, and acceptance are all important in the book. The story is told in five different perspectives: Catherine (oldest sister), Anne (second sister), Jessica (youngest sister), Dale (Anne's husband) and Eva (the Mom). Each chapter is only a few pages long, so readers do not get tired of one character. There are 61 chapters in 259 pages only.

At first, I really liked Jessica's story but her part was not as big as her other two sisters. I wish her character was more developed. Catherine's story was the most interesting to me. There was more than just chemotherapy, her love life made everything more complicated. I found Anne to be the annoying one, she's just like her mother.

I like the twist at chapter 40. It was so unexpected. After that, the book became so emotional. However, it changed the main focus to my least favorite sister, Anne. Overall, I really enjoyed the book. =)

4 out of 5 stars

### **Pam Bolt says**

WOW! Katrina Willis is an incredible author with her ability to twist several plots and significant heavy issues together. There are so many painful and very heavy issues all in one story that it almost became too much for me. Still, I gained an understanding of each of the issues and what one experiences while battling them. I loved the book and character development and highly recommend to anyone! I needed an epilogue to help me tie everything together at the end. I was shocked when I was done reading that there wasn't more. I'm looking forward to more from Katrina!

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### **Teresa Kander says**

I was interested in reading this book because of the character of Catherine, who is battling breast cancer. After my own cancer fight, I'm always drawn to characters like her--but this book is SO much more than just Catherine's story.

These three sisters live very different lives, but they all share a brokenness brought about by parents who were never fully present in their childhood. In Part One, we get to meet each of them, as well as their mother and other people who are part of their lives, and see what demons they are fighting along the way. In Part Two, after a devastating loss, they each realize what matters most to them, and start working to achieve it.

This is a touching, realistic story, filled with emotion. The author has a writing style that draws you into the lives of her characters and keeps you reading to find out what happens next. A truly amazing first novel!

\*\*I received a copy of this book in exchange for an honest review. All thoughts and opinions are entirely my own.\*\*

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### **Jo says**

I had never read one of Katrina Anne Willis's books before - and what a treat I have been missing! This was easily one of the best books I have read this year. Realistic and often harsh, it details the story of three emotionally damaged sisters, Catherine, Anne and Jessica, offspring of Big Jim, their handsome cheating father, and Eva, broken, disillusioned and exhausted with nothing left to give her growing daughters. We join the sisters in adulthood; Catherine, a university professor currently receiving chemotherapy treatment for breast cancer. Cynical and straight talking, Catherine stumbles suddenly upon love in the most unlikely of places and is overawed by its transformative power in her life. Anne, married mother of two, staid, reserved, struggling and overwhelmed by family responsibilities, financial ruin and a grief that consumes her. Finally, Jessica, estranged from her dysfunctional family after running away in her teens. After a chance encounter with her brother-in-law Dale, Jessica hovers on the periphery, unsure of herself, of her place in her family - and of life itself!

Although I was slow to start 'Parting Gifts,' that must have been lack of initial concentration on my part, because once engaged | just could not put this book down. The characters were so real, and yet despite their flaws, so likeable, so relatable. They drew me in to their stories and I was fascinated by how carefully

Katrina Anne Willis observed her characters, how believable their responses were to the challenges life threw at them.

Alongside we had flashbacks to Eva and Big Jim's life before the sisters; their marriage, their battles, their life-changing events, all of which provide clues as to why their offspring are so emotionally damaged. They could be any one of us however; grief, guilt, jealousy, anger are not once in a lifetime experiences, they are everyday occurrences - things that happen to someone every day, and I believe that is in the reality that lies the strength of 'Parting Gifts.'

I give this book 5 full stars!

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### **Candi Banta says**

As a debut novel, I was blown away. I did not know what to expect from this book. Katrina has a beautiful way with words, a gift of language. I felt every emotion she was trying to impart in her writing. Although this book was an emotional read and very painful at times, I could not put it down. Her book was very eloquently written, and she left me wanting more. Kudos, my friend! I look forward to reading more of your books for a long time to come. Maybe someday there will even be a sequel to Parting Gifts...

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### **Debbie Ungar says**

Loved reading about these midwestern sisters and their lives and relationships. Great character development and an interesting story. Ms. Willis is a gifted writer. Add this one to your summer reading list.

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### **Shanna Loewen says**

This book was at once more difficult for me to read and oddly comforting even though the subject matter wasn't easy. This is a story of three sisters, Catherine, Anne and Jessica (I am one of three,) who are all facing difficulties of their own and one sister is battling breast cancer (as my sister just did as well!)

This story is so well written that it is hard to believe that Katrina is a new author. I think what captured me was the view of how we are different sisters to each sister and have different views of parents than one another even growing up in the same household. I think Willis does a deft job of showing those relationships, sacrifices, and heartaches that are woven through any family's history. This book is one to read because it will become part of you in some way but it will also force you into a lot of emotions but in very subtle and surprising ways.

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### **Jennifer says**

Three sisters. Three different lifestyles. Raised under the same roof by the same parents.

I often see this happen even in my own family. We were all raised by the same two parents, yet have all turned out amazingly different. This is what has happened in Parting Gifts by Katrina Anne Willis. The crux is how will it all turn out in the end.

Ms. Willis writes with an easy style. At parts I was laughing, and at others I had tears welling up in my eyes. This story gave me all the right feels at the right times. And I liked the very end of the story. I won't spoil it for you, but it felt right to me.

I would gladly read anything Ms. Willis writes and recommend Parting Gifts to my friends.

I received a copy of this book on NetGalley from the publisher and also a print copy from BookSparks for my honest review.

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